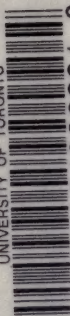


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**THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
WILLIAM BECKFORD
OF FONTHILL**

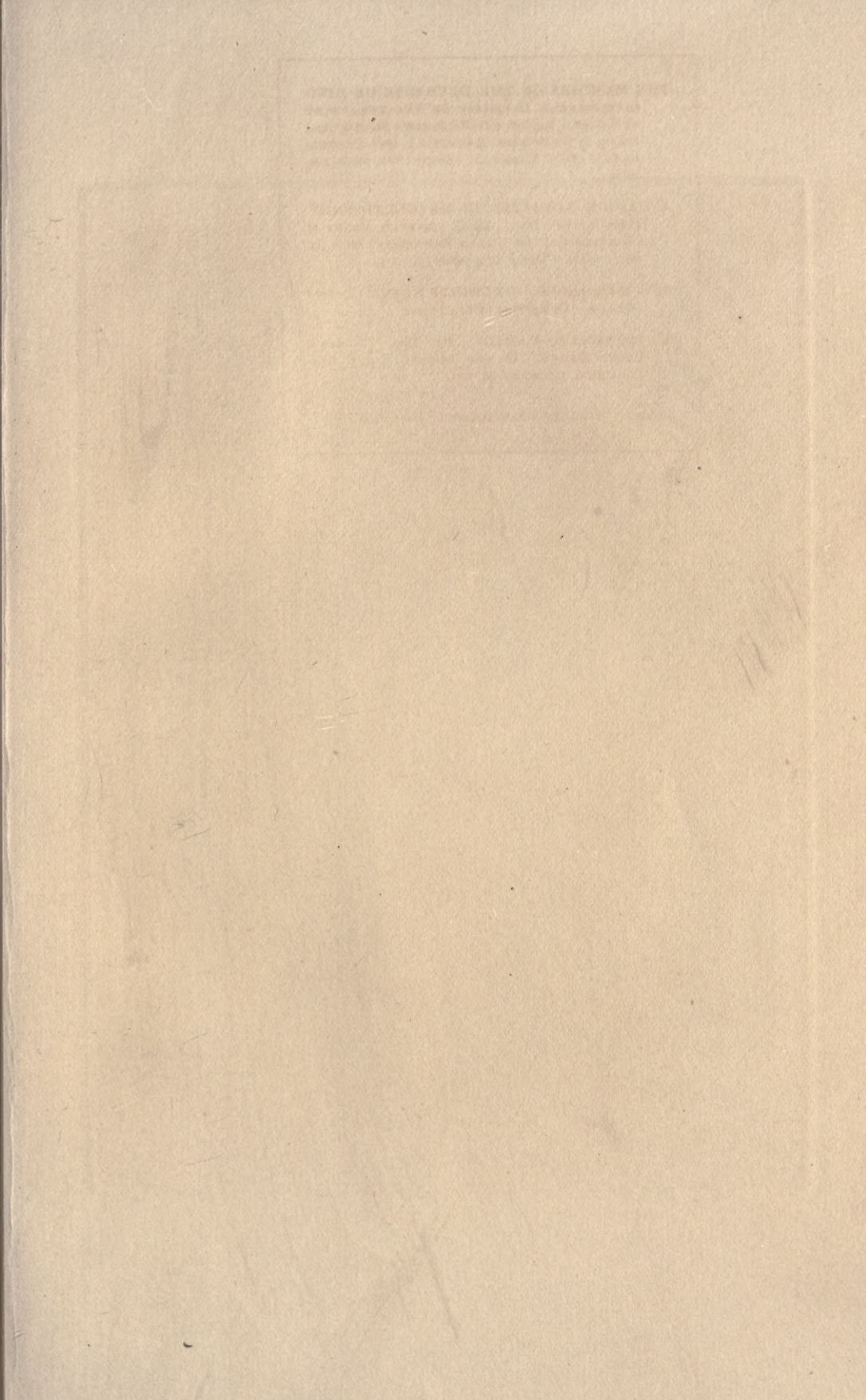
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William Beckford.
By permission of the Duke of Hamilton.

**THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
WILLIAM BECKFORD
OF FONTHILL**

(AUTHOR OF "VATHEK")

BY
LEWIS MELVILLE



ILLUSTRATED

**LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1910**

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TO
THE DUKE OF HAMILTON
WITHOUT WHOSE GENEROUS
COURTESY THIS BOOK
COULD NOT HAVE
BEEN WRITTEN

PREFACE

It is strange that during the three-score years that have elapsed since the death of William Beckford only one attempt, and that, to quote Dr. Garnett, "a most intolerable piece of bookmaking," has been made to write his biography, for his character and achievements were just those that usually attract attention. He was, indeed, a many-sided man. As an author he gave proof of his humour in that elaborate, long-forgotten jest, the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters"; of his imagination in the famous story of "Vathek," and of his powers of observation and picturesque description in his books of travel: work that extorted the praise of Byron, Lockhart, and Benjamin Disraeli. He was the greatest English *connoisseur* of his day, collecting most kinds of works of art and *vertu*; his library was one of the most magnificent ever brought together in this country by a private individual; and, further, he was to a great extent architect of his pleasure-palace of Fonthill. The son of a millionaire who has his niche in the political history of England, he was brought up under the eye of Chatham and Camden; in his childhood was a playfellow of the younger Pitt; while yet a lad made acquaintance with Lord Thurlow, Voltaire, Madame de Staël, and a host of notabilities; and in later days was intimate with Nelson, Sir William Hamilton and his second too-famous wife Emma, Samuel Rogers, the Duke of Portland and Disraeli.

The memoir of Beckford, to which allusion has been made, was written by Cyrus Redding, and published in 1859. It is largely composed of extracts from Beckford's books, and the only valuable matter in it is the "Conversations with the Author of 'Vathek,'" that Redding had printed fifteen years earlier in the *New Monthly Magazine*. The best biographical account of Beckford is in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, written by Dr. Garnett, who subsequently contributed a valuable introduction, containing extracts from hitherto unpublished letters, to an edition of "Vathek" (1893). There is, too, a very interesting article by Mrs. Gertrude Townshend Mayer, entitled, "The Sultan of Lansdown Tower" (*Temple Bar*, June 1900), in which is printed another series of letters, written to Clarke, the second-hand bookseller. There are glimpses of Beckford in the Chatham Correspondence, Pettigrew's "Life of Nelson," Moore's "Life of Byron," the Memoirs of Moore and Rogers, and Mr. Walter Sichel's biography of Emma, Lady Hamilton; and no one can afford to ignore Mr. Charles Whibley's admirable character-sketch of "The Caliph of Fonthill" in that volume of brilliant essays, "The Pageantry of Life." An interesting paper on "Vathek" was contributed by Mr. John Hodgkin to the *Athenæum* (December 25, 1909) while this book was in the press.

Besides the material already accessible, though never before gathered together, I have been so fortunate as to obtain permission to include a very considerable number of letters, hitherto unpublished, written by Beckford between 1777 and 1844; that is to say, from his seventeenth to the last year of his long life. Beckford left his property to his surviving daughter, Susan Euphemia, wife of Alexander, tenth Duke of Hamilton; and, though his books and pictures have been dispersed, his correspondence and papers have been preserved in the Charter Room of Hamilton Palace. By the courtesy of the present Duke of Hamilton I have examined the letters and manuscripts,

and from them I have selected some two hundred of the former for insertion in this work. I have also been allowed to photograph several of the pictures at Hamilton Palace, which are here reproduced, some of them for the first time. Nor is this by any means the extent of my good fortune. Mrs. Alfred Morrison, of Fonthill House, has generously permitted me to print the valuable series of letters in her possession written by Beckford to the Rev. Samuel Henley, the translator of "Vathek," during the period when that masterpiece was being composed; and Mr. John Macnamara, of Brighton, has sent me nineteen letters, mostly used in the chapter "Beckford's Adventure in Diplomacy," that he inherited from his great-uncle, Mr. Pedley, a friend of Beckford, and brother to that Robert Deverell (formerly Pedley), who was for some years from 1802 Member of Parliament for Saltash. Some of Mr. Macnamara's letters I printed in the issue of the *Nineteenth Century and After* for May 1909, and to a happy suggestion of the editor, Mr. W. Wray Skilbeck, I owe the title of the chapter above mentioned. By the kindness of the owner of the letters, Mrs. Townshend Mayer, and Messrs. Macmillan and Co., Ltd., I am also enabled to include the interesting correspondence first made public in "The Sultan of Lansdown Tower." There are no Beckford letters of any interest in the British Museum, but in the Forster Bequest at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, is a series written between 1840 and 1844, the greater part of which will be found in the following pages. As Beckford is little known as a letter-writer, I venture to hope that the correspondence printed here, most of it for the first time, will be found peculiarly interesting.

My very sincere thanks are due to the ladies and gentlemen already mentioned; and I gladly make acknowledgment of assistance and advice I have received from Mrs. A. C. Inchbold, the author of "Lisbon and Cintra," Mr. Francis A. Yates, Mr. Frederick S. Shum,

Mr. A. Somerville Story, Mr. John Charrington, Mr. C. E. S. Chambers, Mr. J. M. Bullock (whose brochure on "The Earls of Aboyne" was of use to me), Mr. Osman Edwards, Mr. W. Watanabe, Dr. William Ettles, Dr. Lisle Goodridge, and Mr. W. F. Kirby. The Rev. Henry W. Clark, of Harpenden, has placed me under a heavy obligation by giving me the benefit of his counsel throughout the composition of this book, and by reading the proofs. I am indebted to Mr. John Murray for permission to insert two copyright letters of Lord Beaconsfield; while to Mr. George Dalziel, Mr. Duncan C. Barr, Chamberlain to the Duke of Hamilton, Mr. Matthew Ker, and Mr. S. Forrest, of the Hamilton Estate Office, I am under a deep obligation for many kindly services during the time I was examining the Beckford papers at Hamilton Palace. The letters I selected at Hamilton Palace for this work were carefully copied by Miss Hope. The letters are printed here as written, but some have been punctuated, so as to make easier reading.

To Mr. Walter Jerrold I owe a very heavy debt of gratitude, for he was about to write a biography of Beckford, when, seeing the announcement that I was engaged upon a similar task, he most generously withdrew from the field, and left it open to me, who otherwise would have been reluctant to continue with the work and challenge comparison with one whose established reputation, literary skill, and wide knowledge, are so many assurances that he would have done it far better.

LEWIS MELVILLE.

SALCOMBE, HARPENDEN, HERTS.
April 1910.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY

Pp. 1-5

CHAPTER I

FAMILY HISTORY

The origin of the Beckford family : Robert de Bekeford : Alexander de Beckford : Sir William Beckford : Richard Beckford, tailor : Sir Thomas Beckford : Peter Beckford goes to Jamaica : The Beckfords in Jamaica : Colonel Peter Beckford : The Hon. Peter Beckford : William Beckford, father of the author of "Vathek" : Educated at Westminster School : Makes the Grand Tour : A love-affair : His two marriages : Becomes a London merchant : Acquires Fonthill House : M.P. for Shaftesbury : Elected Alderman : Returned to Parliament for the City of London : Lord Mayor : A supporter of Pitt and of Wilkes : Lord Mayor again : His historic speech : Lord Chatham's letter of congratulation : His death : His statue in the Guildhall

Pp. 6-12

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS (1760-1776)

Birth of William Beckford, the author of "Vathek" : Lord Chatham (then William Pitt) his godfather : Alderman Beckford's letter to Lord Chatham : Lord Chatham, Lord Camden, and "the good Lord Lyttelton" superintend the boy's education after his father's death : The Rev. John Lettice appointed his tutor : The mutual respect of Beckford and Lettice : A letter from Lettice to Beckford, 1823 : Beckford's education : The wide range of subjects in which he was instructed : His studious disposition : He subsequently laments his ignorance of astronomy : His love of books : His early study of genealogy, and of "The Arabian Nights" : A spoilt child : Beckford at thirteen, according to Lord Chatham : Rebuked by the Duchess of Queensberry : Lives with his mother : Visitors to Fonthill : Visits to Burton Pynsent : His letter on the death of Lord Chatham : His opinion of Chatham and William Pitt

Pp. 13-24

CHAPTER III

GENEVA (1777-1778)

Mrs. Beckford objects to her son going to a University : He is sent abroad to finish his education : His stay at Geneva, 1777-8 : His studies : His friends : Bonnet : Saussure : Huber : He meets Madame de Staël : His visit to Ferney to see Voltaire : And to the Grande Chartreuse : His verses written at the monastery : Some letters written by him abroad, 1777-8

Pp. 25-58

CHAPTER IV

"BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF EXTRAORDINARY
PAINTERS" (1778-1780)

Beckford returns to Fonthill : His impressions : Sent on a tour through England : Plymouth : He and Lettice arrested as spies : Visits Lord Courtenay, and Charles Hamilton : A taste for horticulture : Goes north : Returns to Fonthill : Writes "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" : Correspondence with Lettice concerning the book : Lettice's preface to the "Memoirs" : Motives that inspired the "Memoirs" : Beckford's sense of fun : "A laughable book" : Lockhart's verdict on the "Memoirs" : The account of the Extraordinary Painter "Sucrewasser of Vienna" : Letters, December 3, 1779, to May 10, 1780 : Beckford at Court Pp. 59-87

CHAPTER V

"DREAMS, WAKING THOUGHTS, AND INCIDENTS"
(1780-1781)

Beckford again goes abroad : The places he visited : The letters he wrote during his tour : "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents" : A description of this work : His anxiety that it should be a success : The book printed, but suppressed on the eve of publication : Possible reasons for its suppression : False charges brought against Beckford Pp. 88-111

CHAPTER VI

COMING OF AGE (1781-1782)

Beckford returns from his second Continental tour : Stays awhile in London : Goes to Fonthill : Invitations sent out for a house-party at Fonthill for Beckford's coming of age : The festivities on that occasion : "A fine frenzy for three days" : Visits Mount Edgcumbe Pp. 112-123

CHAPTER VII

"VATHEK" (1782)

The history of the composition of "Vathek" : A misunderstanding or a misstatement : The Rev. Samuel Henley : Beckford conceives the idea of "Vathek," and proceeds to write it : Henley translates it : The author's appreciation of the translation : Correspondence between Beckford and Henley : Beckford decides that the original and the translation shall be published simultaneously : Henley publishes his version without permission : His weak defence of his action : Henley states in his preface that there was an Oriental original : Beckford's indignation : He publishes "Vathek" at Lausanne and Paris : The sources of "Vathek" : Some appreciations of the story : The unpublished "Episodes" of "Vathek" Pp. 124-147

CONTENTS

xiii

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE (1783-1786)

Beckford decides to go abroad again : His pleasure at leaving England : Letter to Lady Hamilton on the eve of his departure : Travels *en prince* : His retinue : Lettice, Errhert, Burton, Cozens : Letters : Returns to England in the spring of 1783 : His marriage : Spends his honeymoon on the Continent : Letters : In Switzerland : The death of his wife : His grief
Pp. 148-173

CHAPTER IX

SPAIN, PORTUGAL, AND FRANCE (1787-1796)

Beckford visits Portugal : Becomes acquainted with the Marialva family at Lisbon : His impressions of the country : A bull-fight : In Spain : Returns to Portugal : Then goes to Paris : A suspect : His life in danger : Chardin effects his escape to England : At Fonthill : At Lausanne : Purchases Gibbon's library : Alcobaca and Batalha : Byron on Beckford's "paradise" at Montserrat : Beckford's two burlesque novels
Pp. 174-184

CHAPTER X

AN ADVENTURE IN DIPLOMACY (1797)

Inducements for Beckford to become a politician : A letter from Lord Thurlow : Beckford becomes M.P. for Wells : Later sits for Hinton : A silent member : Comments on politicians : O'Connell, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord John Russell, Palmerston, Lord Howick : His expectations of a serious political crisis : His desire to be sent as British envoy to Lisbon : His attempt to negotiate a peace between France and England in 1797 : The correspondence relating thereto
Pp. 185-212

CHAPTER XI

FONTHILL ABBEY

Pp. 213-227

CHAPTER XII

"THE ABBOT OF FONTHILL" (1796-1822)

The Nelson *fête* at Fonthill : Sir William Hamilton and his second wife : Beckford desires a peerage—letter from Lord Thurlow, &c. : Emma, Lady Hamilton : "Peter Pindar" : Nelson at Fonthill : Lady Hamilton's "attitudes" : A letter from Beckford to Lord Nelson : The quiet life at Fonthill : Some visitors : The impressions of Benjamin West and Samuel Rogers : Beckford's amusements : Selections from his correspondence, 1796-1817 : His indoor occupations : His love of books : Annotated copies : Some literary criticisms : His unpublished anthology : His religious views : "The Last Day" : "A Prayer" : His interest in genealogy and heraldry : His hatred of spurious pedigrees : His unpublished "Liber Veritatis" : His daughters : The younger marries the tenth Duke of Hamilton : The elder Lieutenant-General Orde : The tenth Duke of Hamilton : Beckford's affection for his grandson, the eleventh Duke of Hamilton

Pp. 228-288

CHAPTER XIII

BECKFORD THE COLLECTOR

Beckford's fame as a collector : His first object books and manuscripts and choice bindings : His troubles with bookbinders : His enthusiasm as a collector : His methods : His knowledge of pictures : His love of Raphael's works : Some criticisms : On the neglect of art by Governments : His knowledge of prints : His attitude towards rival collectors : His dislike for Horace Walpole : The Strawberry Hill sale : His correspondence concerning the items he desired : His arrogance : His anger at any failure of his agent : His enthusiasm even in the last month of his life

Pp. 289-313

CHAPTER XIV

"THE SULTAN OF LANSDOWN TOWER" (1822-1837)

The sale of Fonthill Abbey : Bought by John Farquhar in 1822 : The contents sold by Farquhar in 1823 : The interest displayed by collectors : A skit on the sale : Hazlitt's attack on Beckford's taste : A defence of Beckford : The cost of building the Abbey : A disastrous lawsuit : Depreciation of property in Jamaica : Beckford's diminishing income : Bears the loss of the Abbey philosophically : Makes an offer for Prior Park, Bath : Buys houses in Lansdown Crescent : And land on Lansdown Hill : Erects another tower : Beckford and rights of way : Description of his Bath residence and the tower : His mode of life at Bath : A man of mystery : Absurd rumours concerning him : The dwarf Piero : His published books : His anonymous works : His unpublished manuscripts : Various editions of "Vathek" : The publication of "Italy, Spain, and Portugal," &c., and "Alcobaça and Batalha" : And correspondence concerning it : His annoyance at adverse criticisms : Lockhart's eulogistic review of the "Travels" : Beckford and Benjamin Disraeli

Pp. 314-342

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST YEARS OF WILLIAM BECKFORD (1838-1844)

Beckford's health : His good spirits : His occupations : He preserves all his faculties in old age : His activity : His fortune : Correspondence concerning the sale of pictures : His last illness : His death : His grave

Pp. 343-352

APPENDIX :

Pp. 355-366

A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire. By
James Storer, London, 1812

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pp. 367-374

AUTHORITIES

Pp. 375-376

INDEX

Pp. 377-391

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
WILLIAM BECKFORD (<i>From a painting by G. Romney</i>) <i>Photogravure</i>	Frontispiece
ALDERMAN BECKFORD. Sir Joshua Reynolds <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	10
WILLIAM BECKFORD. George Romney <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	26
HON. MRS. PETER BECKFORD. Sir Joshua Reynolds <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	90
MARGARET AND SUSAN BECKFORD. George Romney <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	172
WILLIAM BECKFORD. George Romney <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	174
FONTHILL ABBEY (VIEW OF THE WEST AND SOUTH FRONTS). John Rutter	214
FONTHILL ABBEY (INTERIOR OF THE GREAT WESTERN HALL). John Rutter	224
WILLIAM BECKFORD. Romney <i>From an old engraving</i>	228
SUSAN EUPHEMIA, DUCHESS OF HAMILTON. Thomas Phillips <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	284
ALEXANDER, TENTH DUKE OF HAMILTON, K.T. Sir Henry Raeburn <i>By permission of the Duke of Hamilton</i>	286
LANSDOWN TOWER, BATH. Willis Maddox <i>From a drawing on stone by C. J. Richardson, F.S.A.</i>	324
WILLIAM BECKFORD. John Doyle	344



INTRODUCTORY

It may be said with truth that there were few famous men born in the eighteenth century of whom less is known than of William Beckford of Fonthill, the author of "Vathek." There is an abundance of legend, as little trustworthy as most legends, but of the man as he was few people have even a remote conception. This may be perhaps because there has been no biography of him worthy the name, but it is more probably due to the fact that he led a secluded life. It is certain that stories concerning him, invariably defamatory and usually libellous, were circulated so far back as the days of his minority, and that these were revived when, after his continental tours, he settled at Fonthill. Then the air of mystery that enveloped him created grave suspicion in the minds of his fox-hunting neighbours. Everything he said was misrepresented and regarded as evidence against him, until so strong was the feeling that it was looked upon as disgraceful to visit him. This, however, did not prevent Nelson, or Sam Rogers, or Sir William Hamilton, from going to Fonthill, nor later, did it prevent his acquaintance with Benjamin Disraeli. Notwithstanding, Beckford was accused of almost every conceivable crime, and John Mitford, in one of his note-books, solemnly recorded that Beckford was accused of poisoning his wife at Cintra.* There was no more truth in any other accusation than in this of causing the death of a woman to whom he was deeply attached, and whose loss he sincerely mourned.

* British Museum, Add. MSS. 32566, f. 34.

Thirty years after her death Rogers noticed that there were tears in Beckford's eyes while he was talking of her.

This, however, was but one of many slanders. It was said he built the high wall round his estate at Fonthill so that his orgies might be carried on unperceived—the wall was built because no mere request would keep the hunters off his land, and he could not bear to see the death agonies of a fox. It was said he kept a number of dwarfs, and with their aid performed blasphemous rites and indulged in magical incantation—he had in his service one dwarf, Piero, whom he had rescued in some Italian town from a cruel father. Even so recently as ten years ago an anonymous writer thought it worth while to record in a literary journal * the reminiscences of an elderly lady who lived at Bath when Beckford resided in that city, who was a child then, and who had no acquaintance with him. This elderly lady states that “a species of paroxysm would seize Beckford if he saw a woman,” yet, a line before, she speaks of his riding through the streets of Bath! Were the women of Bath on these occasions, it is legitimate to ask, commanded, like the inhabitants of Coventry when Lady Godiva took her famous airing, to keep out of sight? Or was Beckford seen to have paroxysm after paroxysm as his horse took him through the narrow streets of the old-world city? The same authority relates that at Beckford's house in Lansdown Crescent there were curiously constructed niches in the walls of the staircase, so that the female servants could conceal themselves when they heard their master's footsteps; and that one girl, to satisfy her curiosity as to what Beckford would do if he saw her, had her curiosity fully satisfied, for “the woman-hater, in a paroxysm of fury, seized her by the waist,” and threw her over the banisters. This suggests a new version of the Peeping Tom episode, and also brings to mind the nursery rhyme:

He took her by the left leg and threw her down the stairs.

* *Literature*, June 30, 1900.

This being the case, it is pleasant to be told that the misogynist generously bestowed on the maid a pension for life. The story is nearly as good, and quite as true, as that of the gentleman who killed a waiter and told the landlord of the inn, who thought he must send for the police, to charge it in the bill.

The fact is, the majority of writers on Beckford have been willing to recount what they have heard, without making any attempt at verification, even when such a task would not have been difficult. Beckford, we are told, was as likely to thrash a beggar in the streets as to give him alms. This is really the most truthful of all the charges brought against him, for it actually has for its foundation the fact that he once did strike a beggar! Here is the story: When Beckford was riding one day to Weston a man near his gates begged from him and received a coin; delighted with his success, the beggar watched which way the donor was going, took a short cut, and at another place again asked for alms, only to be recognised and struck with a whip.

The calumnies that pursued Beckford during his life, and his memory since his death, were bad enough, but the excuses that are made for him nowadays are worse. The writer already referred to as retailing the elderly lady's gossip, unable to account for Beckford's mysterious seclusion and other peculiarities, falls back upon the convenient suggestion of "a mental derangement." "We learn," he says, in support of his contention, "that at his death he showed scarcely a sign of age, a peculiarity frequently noticed, of course, among those with similar mental aberrations." Another peculiarity frequently noticed among those with similar mental aberrations, we may add, is that at their death many show every sign of age.

Most of those who do not suggest that Beckford was mad, love to dwell upon his eccentricities; but an examination of their arguments show that these eccentricities were limited to the building of Fonthill and a love of seclusion.

Fonthill was, indeed, an eccentricity—the whim of a millionaire ; and the love of seclusion, as a perusal of this biography will show, has been vastly exaggerated. What a genius he had “Vathek” proves conclusively ; how sane he was to the end of his days may be discerned from the letters, printed in this work, written in the last years, even in the last month, of his long life.

The keynote of Beckford's character was enthusiasm. If he undertook anything it must be done forthwith ; if he had a desire, he must satisfy it with the least possible delay. When he built Fonthill he had five hundred men working day and night ; when he collected books, he did so with such vigour that he brought together one of the finest private libraries in the world. That last passion never deserted him, and in his eighty-fourth year he studied catalogues as keenly, and was as impatient for news of the success that had attended his agent at the auction sales, as when he began half a century earlier. Of his good qualities something will be said in the ensuing pages ; but here it may be remarked that no serious charge brought against him has any foundation stronger than gossip, and that no one of his friends ever cast an aspersion upon him or gave credit to the rumours that circulated.

Like most men, Beckford did not suffer bores gladly ; but, unlike the majority, he would have naught to do with them. Having a genius and a million, he lived his life as he pleased ; and, as he wrote when he was seventeen, he was determined not to be what to-day is called a “horsey” man, nor “to despise poetry and venerable Antiquity, murder Taste, abhor imagination, distrust all the charms of Eloquence unless capable of mathematical demonstration, and more than all . . . be vigourously incredulous” ; above all, he was determined not to be “what your old Ladies call . . . a charming Gentleman.” While welcoming his few friends, and opening wide his door to distinguished writers, artists, and musicians, he held the rest of the world

at bay, and chose to spend his days with his books and pictures, playing the piano, and superintending his gardens. So well did he order his life that when the flame was burning out, he could say truthfully, "I have never known a moment's *ennui*."

CHAPTER I

FAMILY HISTORY

The origin of the Beckford family : Robert de Bekeford : Alexander de Beckford : Sir William Beckford : Richard Beckford, tailor : Sir Thomas Beckford : Peter Beckford goes to Jamaica : The Beckfords in Jamaica : Colonel Peter Beckford : The Hon. Peter Beckford : William Beckford, father of the author of "Vathek" : Educated at Westminster School : Makes the Grand Tour : A love-affair : His two marriages : Becomes a London merchant : Acquires Fonthill House : M.P. for Shaftesbury : Elected Alderman : Returned to Parliament for the City of London : Lord Mayor : A supporter of Pitt and of Wilkes : Lord Mayor again : His historic speech : Lord Chatham's letter of congratulation : His death : His statue in the Guildhall

THE origin of the Beckford family is not easily to be traced, and it is enough, perhaps, to accept the statement made by Cyrus Redding in his memoir of the author of "Vathek," that it "cannot be disproved" that a family named Beckford or Bekeford was settled before the Norman Conquest in the parish of Beckford, near Tewkesbury. Certainly the annals of Gloucestershire contain mention in the twelfth century of a Robert de Bekeford, and in the reign of Richard II. of an Alexander de Beckford; but the first distinguished Beckford was that Sir William who fought and died for Richard III. at Bosworth Field. His action involved the immediate ruin of his family, for Henry VII. sequestrated from the fallen knight's successors their lands in the parish of Beckford: these, in the reign of Edward VI., were presented by the crown to Sir Richard Lee.

Nothing more is known of the family until the

seventeenth century, when Richard Beckford lived at Maidenhead and earned his livelihood as a tailor. Probably he would never have been heard of but for his sons; one of these, Thomas, a clothworker—Pepys called him the “slop-seller”—became Alderman and Sheriff of London and was knighted in 1677, and the other, Peter, went to Jamaica. With the descendants of Thomas it is not necessary to concern ourselves; but we must follow the career of Peter, who was the great-great-grandfather of the subject of this biography.

Probably Peter was induced to go to Jamaica because relatives of his were already established there in good positions. In course of time the members of the family had become a power in the island: there was Edward Beckford, who held a patent of land in 1666; Beckford Town, near Savannah le Mar, in the parish of Westmoreland and the county of Cornwall, was the property of Richard Beckford; Esher was one of the estates of William Beckford; and Ballard Beckford owned the Whitehall and Frontier properties. Peter, who also became a planter, was no less successful, and, first acquiring land in 1669, subsequently became very wealthy. His eldest son, who became Colonel Peter Beckford, was sometime Commander-in-chief of the forces of the colony, and distinguished himself against the French. In this position he contrived to acquire so much influence, that during the reign of Charles II. he was appointed President of the Council in Jamaica, and under William III. was given the high office of Governor, which he held until April 3, 1710, when he died suddenly—it is said in a fit of passion occasioned by his being contradicted by a member of the Council. Colonel Peter Beckford married, first, Bridget (Beeston?), who died in 1671, and then Anne Ballard, who died in 1696; and he had issue, two daughters, Priscilla, born in 1675, and Elizabeth, born three years later; and three sons, Peter; Charles, who died in infancy in

1677; and Thomas, who was killed in 1731 by a man he had offended.

Colonel Peter Beckford increased the fortune left him by his father, and at the time of his death, besides mortgages and other valuable securities, was possessed of twenty-four plantations and twelve hundred slaves. The bulk of this property descended to the eldest son, the Hon. Peter Beckford, Speaker of the House of Assembly of the island, who died on November 3, 1735, leaving land and investments valued at £300,000. He had married Bathshua, daughter of Colonel Julines Hering, and sister and co-heir of Nathaniel Hering; and of this union there were thirteen children. His heir was his eldest son, Peter, who, dying unmarried in 1737, left all his great possessions to his second brother, William, the father of the author of "Vathek."*

Of William Beckford something must be said, but it is unnecessary here to do more than outline his distinguished

* Of the remaining children of the Hon. Peter Beckford, the following particulars have been collected:

RICHARD, barrister, Alderman for the Ward of Farringdon, M.P. for Bristol, died unmarried in 1756, leaving his property, worth £10,000 a year, to his brother William.

THOMAS, a twin with Richard, died young.

JULINES (*d.* 1765), of Stapleton, Dorset, M.P. for Salisbury. He married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Solomon Ashley, of Ledgers Ashby, co. Northampton; and had issue, one son, Peter (1740-1811), M.P. for Morpeth, a distinguished sportsman and author of "Thoughts upon Hare and Fox Hunting," &c. Peter married in 1773 Louisa Pitt, second daughter of Lord Rivers; their son, William Horace, by a special patent, succeeded to the barony and became the third Lord Rivers.

FRANCIS (*d.* 1768), of Basing Park, Hants.; married, first, Lady Albinia Bertie, daughter of the Duke of Ancaster and Kesteven, by whom he had a son who died unmarried; and second, Susanna, daughter of Richard Love, of Basing, who also bore him a son.

GEORGE, died young.

NATHANIEL, died unmarried, 1739.

ANNE (*d.* 1745), married George Ellis, Chief Justice of Jamaica, and had several sons.

PHILLIS
BATHSHUA } died unmarried.

ELIZABETH (*d.* 1791), married, first, Thomas, second Earl of Effingham (*d.* 1763), and had issue one son, the third Earl, and four daughters; and second, Field-marshal Sir George Howard (*d.* 1796).

career, since he died when his only son was ten years of age, and therefore had no direct influence upon the formation of the latter's character. Born in Jamaica on December 19, 1709, he was fourteen years later sent to England, where he was placed in the charge of the Rev. Robert Friend, Headmaster of Westminster School, who subsequently spoke of him as one of the best scholars ever placed in his care. This was high praise, indeed, when it is remembered that at the same time at Westminster were William Murray (afterwards Lord Mansfield), James Johnson (afterwards Bishop of Worcester), and Thomas Hay (afterwards eighth Earl of Kinnoull), called "the triumvirate" because of their great abilities. For some unknown reason, William Beckford did not go to a university, but completed his education by making the Grand Tour. In Holland he fell in love with a beautiful girl, the daughter of a Leyden shopkeeper, whom he induced to return to England with him. It is said that only the certainty of the bitter opposition of his family, and his own dependent position, prevented his marrying her, and that it was his intention at the first opportunity to do so. On his father's death in 1735 he was summoned to Jamaica in connection with the property, and was kept there for a year; but when all arrangements were made, he hurried home eager to make the girl his wife, only to find that in his absence she had been unfaithful; whereupon, much depressed, he bestowed upon her a pension and sent her back to Holland. Of this connection there was a son. Subsequently William Beckford married Maria March, a widow with a daughter Elizabeth (afterwards Mrs. Hervey); and, after her death, Maria, daughter and co-heir of the Hon. George Hamilton, Member of Parliament for Wells, second surviving son of James, sixth Earl of Abercorn.

On his return from Jamaica, Beckford had become a merchant in the City of London, mainly, it may be surmised, with the object of disposing of the produce of his

colonial estates to the best advantage. He had a house in Soho Square, and presently acquired an estate at Fonthill-Giffard in Wiltshire; and both in town and at his country seat he entertained in accordance with his vast wealth. Soon he entered public life. He was elected to Parliament in 1747 as member for Shaftesbury, and held this seat for seven years. In 1752 he was admitted to the freedom and livery of the Ironmongers' Company, and in the next year was appointed Master; while on June 24, 1752, he was chosen Alderman for the Ward of Billingsgate, in succession to Thomas Winterbottom, the Lord Mayor, who had died three weeks earlier. At the general election of 1754 he was returned on April 19 for Petersfield, and on May 7 for the City of London; and, as a matter of course, he decided to represent the greater constituency. Eight years later he became Lord Mayor, and his term of office was distinguished by the most magnificent banquets, though, we are assured, his own tastes in eating and drinking were very simple.

In politics Beckford was on the popular side, a stalwart supporter of the elder Pitt. He sided with Wilkes, and he it was, and not the famous demagogue, who declared that under the House of Hanover Englishmen for the first time had been able to be free, and for the first time had determined to be free. In spite of his protests and the machinations of the Court party, he was in November 1769 again elected Lord Mayor, and it was during this second term of office he made the speech that caused his name to be enrolled in the list of English worthies. On March 14, 1770, Beckford, in his official capacity, presented to the King an Address from the City of London, protesting against a false return that had been made at the Middlesex election. George III. administered to the deputation a stern rebuke; and to this the Lord Mayor, for his part, made indirect reply by a series of toasts which he proposed at a private entertainment at the Mansion House:



ALDERMAN BECKFORD
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

By permission of the Duke of Hamilton

May justice and wisdom ever follow the public councils.

May the fundamental liberties of England be revered and defended.

May the noble assisters and protectors of English liberty be held in perpetual remembrance.

May the violators of the rights of election, and petitioning against grievances, be confounded.

May the wicked be taken away from before the King, that his throne may be established in righteousness.

May corruption cease to be the weapon of the government.

May the spirit of the constitution prevail over secret and undue influence.

Lord Chatham and our absent friends.

George III. had yet to learn that the City of London could not be overawed, and on May 17, Beckford, again accompanied by the Aldermen and livery, presented a second remonstrance, to which the King again replied curtly. Thereupon, unexpectedly Beckford asked permission to say a few words, and, without waiting for permission or refusal, delivered the speech that has since become historical.

LORD CHATHAM *to* ALDERMAN BECKFORD

HAYES, *May 25th*, 1770.

MY DEAR LORD,

In the fullness of the Heart the Mouth speaks, and the over-flowing of mine gives Motion to a weak hand, to tell you how truly I respect and love the Spirit, which your Lordship display'd on Wednesday.

The Spirit of Old England spoke, that never to be forgotten day. If the Heart of the Court be harden'd, the feelings of the people will be more and more awaken'd, by every Repetition of unrelenting Oppression, on one part, & of determin'd & legal Exertions, on the other. But I forbear going into a Dissertation, when my Mind is big only with Admiration, Thanks, & Affection.

Adieu then, for the present (to call you by the most

honourable of Titles) *true Lord Mayor of London*, that is, *first* Magistrate of the *first* City of the World! I mean to tell you only a plain truth, when I say, your Lordship's Mayoralty will be revered, till the Constitution is destroy'd & forgotten.

Believe me ever with unalterable attachment

My Dear Lord

Your most faithful

Friend & affectionate

humble Servant

CHATHAM.

Lady Chatham wou'd not pardon me, if I left her out of this Expression of the feelings of Hayes. She desires her Compliments to your Lordship & Lady Mayoress.

The speech was Beckford's last move in the game of politics, for three weeks later, coming up from Fonthill to London, he caught a chill, and died on June 21. Nine days after he was buried at Fonthill. His memory has been perpetuated by a monument erected in his honour in the Guildhall by the City of London, upon the pedestal of which is engraved in letters of gold the speech he made in defence of the liberties of his country.

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS (1760-1776)

Birth of William Beckford, the author of "Vathek" : Lord Chatham (then William Pitt) his godfather : Alderman Beckford's letter to Lord Chatham : Lord Chatham, Lord Camden, and "the good Lord Lyttelton" superintend the boy's education after his father's death : The Rev. John Lettice appointed his tutor : The mutual respect of Beckford and Lettice : A letter from Lettice to Beckford, 1823 : Beckford's education : The wide range of subjects in which he was instructed : His studious disposition : He subsequently laments his ignorance of astronomy : His love of books : His early study of genealogy, and of "The Arabian Nights" : A spoilt child : Beckford at thirteen, according to Lord Chatham : Rebuked by the Duchess of Queensberry : Lives with his mother : Visitors to Fonthill : Visits to Burton Pynsent : His letter on the death of Lord Chatham : His opinion of Chatham and William Pitt

WILLIAM Beckford, the author of "Vathek," the son of Alderman Beckford by his second wife, was born at Fonthill-Giffard, in Wiltshire, on October 1, 1760, and for him was secured the honour of having for his godfather his father's friend, the elder Pitt.

ALDERMAN BECKFORD *to* WILLIAM PITT

FONTHILL, *January 7, 1761.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your very obliging and much esteemed favour duly received. I consider it the greatest honour to have such a sponsor to my child. He was made a Christian last night, and Lord Effingham* was your proxy. No endeavours of mine shall be wanting (if it please God to

* Thomas, second Earl of Effingham, who had married the Alderman's sister, Elizabeth.

spare his life) to instil into his tender mind principles of religion, honour, and love of country. It is true these are old-fashioned principles ; but they are such as you approve of, and practise.

Nothing would give me more pleasure than to take your opinion on my present works [at Fonthill], and to regulate my future operations by your advice and judgment ; but I cannot flatter myself so much as to think it possible to enjoy that comfort, until you have first procured for your country a safe, honourable, and lasting peace.

I am, my dear Sir,
Your ever faithful and
affectionate humble servant,
W. BECKFORD.*

Alderman Beckford died in 1770, and Pitt, now created Lord Chatham, showed that he was not content to be godfather in name only, for he took an active interest in the education of the lad who, if he lived to attain his majority, would be the wealthiest commoner in England. With "the good Lord Lyttelton" and Lord Camden, the Earl drew up plans for his godson's tuition, which met with the entire approval of Mrs. Beckford, whose sole wish in the matter was that her only child should not go to school but should be taught at home.

Lord Lyttelton it was who in 1771 asked Dr. William Cleaver (afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph) to recommend a tutor for little William, whom he represented as even at that early age "possessing parts much above mediocrity and indeed of more than ordinary promise, with a disposition peculiarly amiable." Dr. Cleaver suggested his cousin, the Rev. John Lettice, Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who had recently accompanied Mr. (afterwards Sir) Robert Gunning, Minister Plenipotentiary

* "Chatham Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 11. In the "Correspondence" this letter is by a slip dated 1760, which has led some earlier writers erroneously to state that Beckford was born in 1759.

to the Court of Denmark, as secretary and chaplain, and had been entrusted with the tuition of Miss Gunning. A better choice could not have been made. Lettice, who at this time was thirty-four years of age, was a gentleman and a scholar, with literary tastes that had first found active expression in the poem on the conversion of St. Paul that won the Seatonian prize in 1764 and was published in the following year. He remained, first as tutor, and then as "bear-leader," to Beckford for ten years; he accompanied his charge during the two tours abroad made during his minority, and he undoubtedly exercised as much influence as any one could over that wayward nature. When Beckford came of age Lettice left him, and four years later was presented by his college to the living of Peasmarch, in the riding of Hastings, Sussex. In 1804 he was nominated to the prebend of Seaford in the Church of Chichester, and he held these preferments until his death in 1832, when he had attained the patriarchal age of ninety-four. Beckford's respect for him never faltered; in 1796, when they had been acquainted for a quarter of a century, he sent him on a confidential mission to the Duke of Portland, speaking of him as one who had "proved himself worthy of my fullest confidence"; and three years later he charged him with the education of his little girls, with whom Lettice became such a favourite that the younger, on her marriage with the Duke of Hamilton, secured his appointment as chaplain to her husband. The relations between Beckford and his tutor cannot be better shown than in a letter from the latter, written more than fifty years after their acquaintance began.

THE REV. JOHN LETTICE *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

MY DEAR SIR,

Tho' it is long since I have troubled you with a letter, our old relation of Pupil and Preceptor, and its beneficial consequences to myself, the result of your grate-

ful kindness, will never suffer me to forget you. Good Mr. Clarke, with whom I am in frequent Correspondence for small Matters in the literary Way, can assure you, that I seldom omit to enquire after your Health. Altho' my Difficulty of Hearing, perhaps rather increased since I last paid You my personal Respects, makes me but an unpleasant Visitor ; yet should I find it convenient to pass a Week or Ten Days with my Relatives in Town in the earlier Part of next Month, I cannot fail to give myself the Pleasure of a few Morning Calls upon You at your new Residence ; which I hope you will find in all Respects to answer Your Wishes.

Having two Years since, parted with a little Cottage which I had at Folkestone for the Sake of Sea-Bathing, I now content myself with a Bathing-Tub of Salted Water in the Summer, and if occasionally I want a warm Sea-Bath, my frequent Walks to Rye only four Miles distant from Peasmarsh allow me sufficient Opportunities for it. Having, on Account of my Deafness, given up all Visiting in my Parish or Neighbourhood beyond Morning Calls, my time is chiefly pass'd when not engaged in Parochial Duties, in Solitude among my Books till after tea in the Evening, when I read to the Companions of my Fireside ; and still retaining as much activity of Mind as of Body, I hold not only Correspondence with distant Friends and Relatives ; but often write upon Serious Subjects, and sometimes even in Verse ; and may possibly when in Town submit One or Two of my metrical Performances, with Permission, to your Perusal. You may find them to need Correction ; but I should [hesitate] to ask it at your Hands, though I have no Friend on whose Classical Taste I could so safely depend. But I have nearly finished in *Prose* a kind of translation of Three Discourses from the French of "Sauvin," which the Importance of their subject may induce me to publish, and if you would do me so great a Favour as to allow these to lie two or three or more Days upon your Library Table for Correction, where the French Idiom may have led me into some Improprieties of Expression in English, I shall be greatly obliged if you would mark such Passages by underlining them with your Pen. If the corrective Words or Phrases happen at once to come into your Mind you would perhaps kindly set them down on the Underlined Passages.

When you find leisure to honour me with a few lines in Answer to this, it will give me great pleasure to hear, that the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton, whom I understand to be still abroad, were Both well, when you heard last from them.

I know not, whether You, whom, without Flattery I can safely say, *Nature* made a Poet of the first Order, ever amuse yourself with writing Verses. If you do, what an admirable Subject would the Change you have made in the Scenes of your Life, afford you for a Poem in the style of Reflexion and Meditation.

I am, my dear Sir,
Very sincerely,
Your Obliged and Affectionate
Humble Servant,

PEASMARSH, LAMBERHURST,
May 4th, 1823.

J. LETTICE.

Under Lettice, the boy's education proceeded upon ordinary lines. He was grounded in the classics and the usual elementary studies, and every care was taken to instil in him religious principles. He was taught French, which to the end of his days he pronounced with the old Court accent ; and such accomplishments as riding, fencing, and dancing. Whenever in any doubt as to what course to pursue with regard to his studies, Lettice had recourse to Lord Chatham, whose decision he always accepted as final.

THE REV. JOHN LETTICE to THE EARL OF CHATHAM

FONTHILL, Dec. 11, 1773.

. . . Mr. Beckford has read one third part of the Essay on Human Understanding, and I believe not unprofitably ; as I call upon him for an account of every paragraph as soon as he has read it ; which he generally gives me with much facility. The habit of frequently tracing the footsteps of so regular and clear a reader as Mr. Locke through the course of an argument may, it is hoped, be no ineffectual method of learning to set his own thoughts in the

best order, and to express them with perspicuity ; and perhaps this would be a point gained, much to be wished ; that of making a gentleman think and speak with precision without the pedantry of art.

Your Lordship's advice on the article of arithmetic was too pressing to suffer me to defer a trial of Mr. Beckford's talent for numbers ; and I may say, that the little time which he has been able to dedicate to them has been well employed, and I do not despair of his becoming a proficient. The cultivation of our own language and studies of the politer kind are by no means neglected ; though they are not to be preferred to the others ; inasmuch as we must look upon taste and sentiment as acquisitions of less importance than the right use of reason. Mr. Beckford may, however, name Homer, Livy, Cicero, and Horace, among his present classical acquaintance, and he is every day becoming more intimate with them.

I assure myself that it will give your Lordship pleasure to be informed that, about a month ago, that splendid heap of oriental drawings, &c., which filled a large table at Burton [Pynsent, Lord Chatham's seat in Somersetshire], has been sacrificed at the shrine of good taste. Mr. Beckford had firmness enough to burn them with his own hand. I hope that, as his judgment grows maturer, it will give me an opportunity of acquainting your Lordship with other sacrifices to the same power.

As your Lordship's goodness has authorised me to beg your advice in any case which concerns my charge, I should be happy if I might be favoured with your sentiments on the subject of Latin composition. I cannot determine whether it be of real necessity, when so many other objects, seemingly indispensable, claim our time and attention, and which cannot be equally pursued, if this be judged necessary to partake them.*

As Beckford grew up he was taught drawing by (all his biographers say, though none give the name) one of the first artists of the day ; and he studied architecture under Sir William Chambers, then building the new Somerset House ; and music under Mozart. He told Cyrus Redding that the air afterwards known as "Non più

* "Chatham Correspondence," vol. iv. pp. 313-6.

andrai" in "The Marriage of Figaro" was hit upon by Mozart at one of these lessons, as a theme upon which his pupil might compose variations. He learnt declamation, too, and at an early age won the approval of Lord Chatham by reciting with correct emphasis and action a speech from Thucydides which he had previously translated into English. "May you, my son," the aged statesman said to his son William, "some day make as brilliant a speaker." The cynical may see in this remark the germ of the dislike that subsequently existed between the younger Pitt and Beckford.

"Great pains has been bestowed upon my education," Beckford said in his old age. "I was living amidst a fine collection of works of art, under competent tutors. I was studious and diligent from inclination. I was fond of reading whatever came in my way. After my classical studies were finished, and while I worked hard at Persian, I read French and English biographies of all sorts." How much he profited by his education, and how well he remembered what he read, the numerous allusions to men and books in the letters written when he was a boy show conclusively. He seems, indeed, to have been taught, or to have acquired by reading, some knowledge of most subjects, except astronomy; and his ignorance of that science caused him regrets. "I regret never having studied astronomy," he said in 1835. "There is a touch of astrology in 'Vathek,' I believe; but astrology is a very obscure science, adept in it as I am pronounced to be by many. Except what everybody knows of the stars, I know nothing. I wish I was better acquainted with some of those distant worlds. Ten years younger, and I would build an observatory on the point of Lansdown towards the Avon, three hundred feet high, furnish it with instruments, and shut myself up until I was master of the science."

So far as books were concerned Beckford was precocious, though, like most lads, he preferred the subjects of

his own choosing to those he was compelled to study. A chance discussion as to whether the Abercorn branch of the Hamilton family, from which his mother was descended, was older than the ducal branch, sent him early to books of genealogy, and his reading in this byway of history imbued him with a pride of race that nothing ever eradicated. His father's descent did not satisfy him, and he studied the pedigree of his mother, and declared he could trace it to John of Gaunt. He claimed to have the unique distinction of being descended from all the barons (of whom any issue remained) who signed Magna Charta. "You know that by my mother's side I am a Hamilton? You remember Grammont's Hamilton? He was an ancestor of mine by the Abercorn family," he said on one occasion; and another day remarked, "Mine is a family of some standing—I had the quarterings properly executed. The heralds traced me to a Norman cobbler; there they stopped." The "Norman cobbler" was, of course, Oliver de Crespin, Steward of Normandy.

Mrs. Beckford had been dissatisfied with the guardians appointed by her husband, and she contrived to have her son made a ward of Chancery. No objection was raised by the Court to the boy being educated at home, and certainly so far as learning was concerned, Beckford undoubtedly profited by this; but a lad brought up under his mother's eye is rarely disciplined as one who has been to school and mixed with boys of his own age. Sometimes this drawback is neutralised when the youngster is addicted to games, but in Beckford's case this was not so. His pleasure was to be in the library, and to read all the books he could lay hands on. One day at a very early age he came across a copy of the "Arabian Nights," and this chance find had more effect upon his life and character than any other incident. He read and re-read these stories with avidity, and the impression they made on him was so strong that Lord Chatham instructed Lettice that the book must be kept from him. The precaution came

too late, for, though the injunction was obeyed and for some years the “Arabian Nights” was withheld from him, the Oriental tales had taken possession of the impressionable reader to such an extent that he could never forget them. They had fired his youthful mind and held his imagination captive; their influence over him never waned all the days of his life; and while they inspired him with the idea of “Vathek,” they also fostered in him the love of magnificence, inherited from his father, that resulted in the erection of Fonthill Abbey and other extravagances. As a lad, owing to the hold the stories had over him, he became a dreamer and lived in an unreal world; and it is not surprising, therefore, that, though of an amiable disposition, he became wilful and capricious.

“Little Beckford was really disappointed at not being in time to see you—a good mark for my young *vivid* friend,” Lord Chatham wrote to William Pitt, October 9, 1773. “He is just as much compounded of the elements of *air* and *fire* as he was. A due proportion of *terrestrial* solidity will, I trust, come and make him perfect.”*

A boy of thirteen who is all “air and fire” is certain to be spoilt by a doting mother and made much of by visitors to the house; and Beckford’s wit was so much encouraged by almost all of them that, in spite of Lettice’s admonitions, he frequently got out of hand. Only the old Duchess of Queensberry—Gay’s Duchess—who lived in the neighbourhood, ventured to rebuke him; when he treated her with some lack of respect at her house, without making any reply, she sent a servant for the great family Bible, and made the boy read a passage from the Book of Solomon. “There it was, young man, that I learnt *my* manners,” she said, impressively; “I hope you will remember what you have read.”

Beckford lived alternately at Fonthill Abbey and at his mother’s house in London, and his most constant companions, besides Lettice, were Mrs. Beckford and Elizabeth

* “Chatham Correspondence,” vol. iv. p. 290.

March, the daughter of the Alderman's first wife, and a girl, we are told, "of considerable personal accomplishments." The boy was brought up to regard and address Elizabeth as a sister, and they lived always on the best terms. When she married Mr. Hervey he corresponded with her, and several letters addressed to her by him will presently be printed ; later he amused himself by introducing her in his burlesque novel, "Azemia." Fonthill during the owner's minority received a frequent succession of visitors, for Mrs. Beckford was given to hospitality, and there sometimes came Lord Chatham and his family, and Lord Camden—whom Beckford called "the Cato of the Bench"—and his daughter, and Thurlow, then Attorney-General ; as well as many of Mrs. Beckford's relations and her connections by marriage, especially Charles Hamilton, Member of Parliament for Truro ; and the late Alderman's sister, Elizabeth, who after the death of her first husband, Lord Effingham, had married Sir George Howard.

Occasionally Beckford, with Lettice in charge, used to stay at Burton Pynsent, and there he noticed the pains Lord Chatham took with the education of his second son. "I remember," he said, "Lord Chatham was very particular about the words he used in conversation. I arrived once at Burton Pynsent, when William Pitt had been absent on a visit, but was hourly expected home. I was in the apartment with the father when the son came in. 'I hope you have spent your time agreeably, William ?' said the Earl. 'Most delectably,' said William. Lord Chatham put on one of his stern looks—sternly, indeed, with his eagle features he could look when he pleased : 'Delectably, sir ? Never let me hear you utter that affected word again. Delectably, sir !' "

Lord Chatham died on May 11, 1778, and when the news reached Beckford, who was abroad, he wrote a letter of condolence to William Pitt, the stilted and formal style of which hides the grief he felt at the loss

of one for whom he always entertained a very sincere affection.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to WILLIAM PITT

If an individual, a Friend, may presume to offer his condolence amidst the effusions of National Grief on a late melancholy occasion, give me leave, my dear Sir, to assure you how sincerely, how deeply, it affected myself. And let me beg you to present the same cordial assurance to Lady Chatham, to My Lord, and all the Family, both on my own and my Mother's account. Mr. Lettice, who has always partaken my own sentiments of respect and veneration for the late Lord Chatham, earnestly begs for a share in this Tribute of our sorrow.

But great and affecting as is the loss we lament, it is happily accompanied with Circumstances which we cannot regard without Exultation. I am at present so situated as to have many occasions of observing with Triumph, that Foreigners are scarcely less affected than ourselves at the generous Contest betwixt the Parliaments of the Capital of England which most shall honour the remains of their patriot. The other expression of the Nation's Gratitude may be checked by the unhappy state of our affairs, but could they have their free course, perhaps the virtues and services we wish to reward are not within the compass of any other Recompense than that which he is gone to receive.

I am ever, Dear Sir,
Your very aff. Friend,
and most obedient Servant,

June 23, 1778.

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Though in these early days Beckford must have taken the great qualities of Lord Chatham on trust, when he grew up he never swerved from this attitude of admiration, and he contrasted the son with the father, greatly to the former's disadvantage. After expressing his belief that George III. persuaded Lord North to prolong the American War after all hope of success had gone, he

declared that the monarch also drove Pitt into the war with France. When it was suggested that the minister might have resigned, "Pitt loved power," he answered; "he was proud—but he had not the pride of his father, who, a courtier in manners and fond of power too, would not suffer the King to rob him of his self-respect." "I should scarcely have dared to look into that grave," he said, years later, when speaking of Pitt's funeral; "all the past would rush upon me; melancholy reflections would haunt me afterwards. William Pitt had great abilities; but he wanted the grand soul of his father."

CHAPTER III

GENEVA (1777-1778)

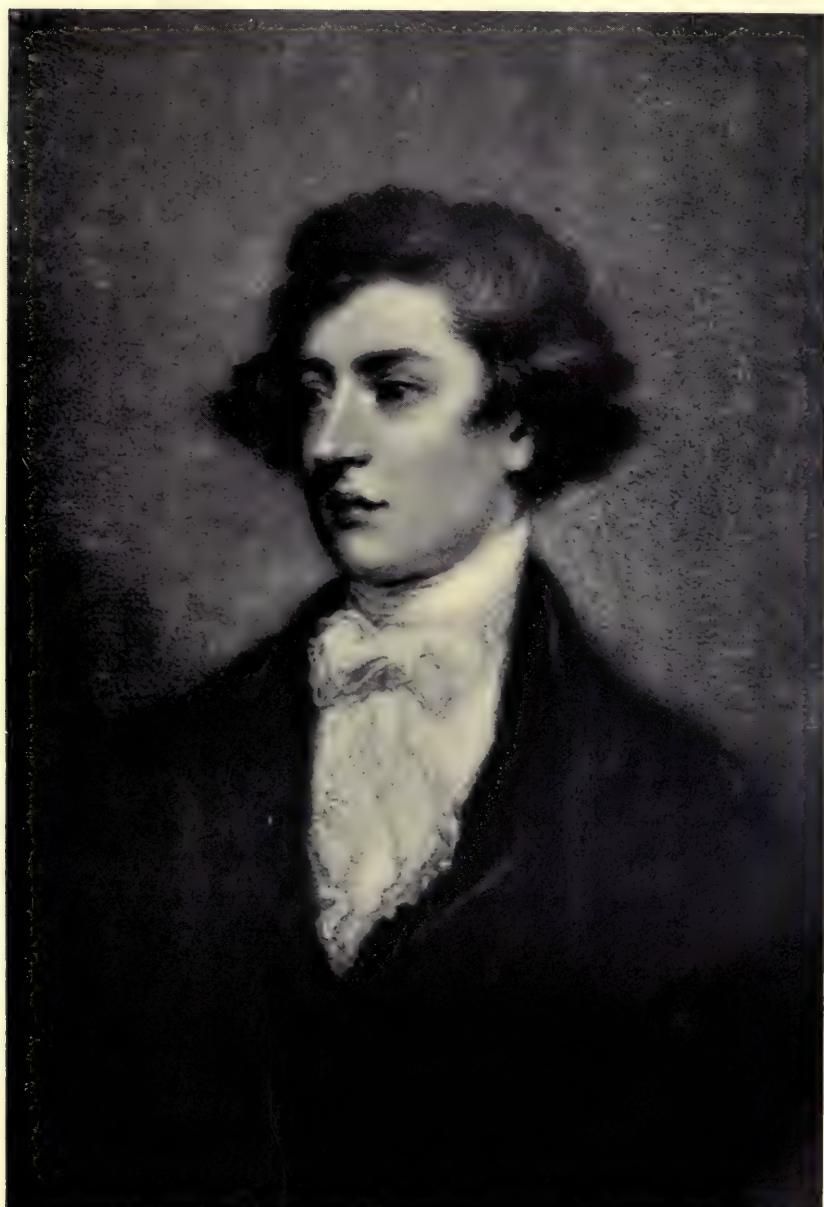
Mrs. Beckford objects to her son going to a University : He is sent abroad to finish his education : His stay at Geneva, 1777-8 : His studies : His friends : Bonnet : Saussure : Huber : He meets Madame de Staël : His visit to Ferney to see Voltaire : And to the Grande Chartreuse : His verses written at the monastery : Some letters written by him abroad, 1777-8

WHEN Beckford was in his seventeenth year, the question arose where he should finish his education, for his mother was strongly prejudiced against sending him to a university, regarding the temptations that would be held out to a young man of enormous wealth as more than counterbalancing the advantages offered. Eventually the Court sanctioned a plan whereby in the autumn of 1777 Beckford should go to Geneva to stay with his relatives Colonel and Miss Hamilton, while Lettice, who was to accompany his pupil and superintend his studies, should be housed close by.

This was the first time Beckford had been emancipated from maternal control, and, though devoted to his mother, like all high-spirited lads, he found much enjoyment in being to some extent his own master. He was sometimes at the Hamiltons' house at Geneva, sometimes at their little country seat at Chênes, three miles away. He worked with Lettice ; read civil law with M. Naville ; pondered over Locke's "Conduct of the Mind" ; and accepted an invitation to Baron Prangin's château near Nyon to hear the lectures on experimental physics by M. d'Epinans, who in England twenty years earlier had

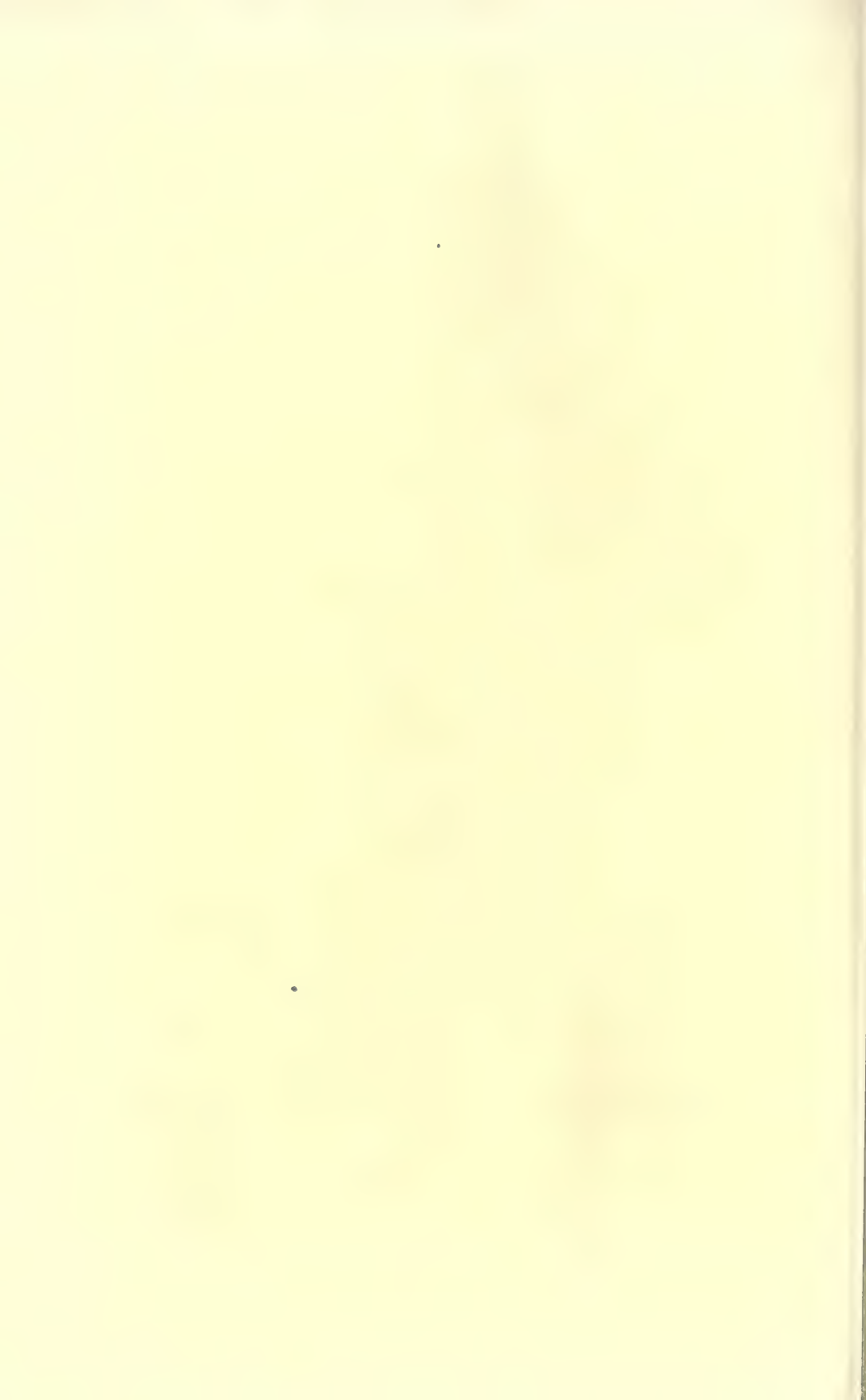
delivered them to the prince who was afterwards George III. For the first time in his life Beckford had the opportunity to enjoy unrestricted intercourse with boys and girls of his own age ; but while he did not shun such company, his greatest delight was to meet men of a studious or artistic turn of mind. He made the acquaintance of Charles Bonnet, the naturalist and philosopher, who had a villa on the Leman; of H. Bénédict de Saussure (who had a house on the banks of the Lake of Geneva), well known for his philosophical researches and still remembered as the author of "*Voyages dans les Alpes*"; and the Hubers, father and son, friends of Voltaire, of the elder of whom there is a spirited and amusing sketch in one of the following letters. Madame de Staël he knew before her marriage, during the lifetime of her father. "I knew Mdle. Neckar at Coppet, a lovely place near Geneva, long, very long ago," he recalled half a century later. "She preferred the Chaussé d'Antin—woman in her inclinations, she thought like a man—wrote like a man—luxuriated in the stagnant vapours of a large capital, where she played the owl—she loved to display herself by waxlight. She would have exchanged her fame for beauty. Her figure was good—I remember her a very symmetrical young lady, who might have sat, as the Princess Borghese did, to Canova, and made a respectable statue."

His acquaintance with these people gave the lad much pleasure, but the day of days during this period was that on which he was taken to Ferney to see Voltaire, then in the eighty-fifth and last year of his life. "Voltaire was a mere skeleton—a living anatomy," Beckford said. "His countenance I shall never forget." When the members of the party were introduced to him, "You see, gentlemen," he said, "'un pauvre Octogènaire' about to quit the world." For a few minutes he conversed on general subjects, and then dismissed them: "My lords and gentlemen, many thanks for your visit. Pray take some refresh-



WILLIAM BECKFORD
GEORGE ROMNEY

By permission of the Duke of Hamilton



ment, and then, if it will amuse you, look into my garden, and give me leave to retire." To Beckford he paid special attention, speaking to him in a complimentary manner of his father, and, on taking leave of him, placing his hand on his head, saying, "There, young Englishman, I give you the blessing of a very old man!"

In June 1778, with Lettice, Beckford visited the Grande Chartreuse and, though his expectations were great, they were more than realised. "It is more wonderfully wild than I can describe, or even you can imagine. It has possessed me to such a degree that at present I can neither think, speak, nor write upon any other subject." So began his account of this excursion, which, written at the time, was first printed five years later in "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents." Therein was published a poem, written on the spot and inserted by the author in the visitor's book of the monastery, but deleted in the revised edition of the work. "I had forgotten it," he said in later life. "It is not very poetical. I suppose there never was a finer field for poetry—a more striking scene. I have a vivid recollection of its grand solitude. The brethren, too, were excellent people—not one now survives whom I saw—death has swept them all away." The lines may be given as a curiosity:

To orisons, the midnight bell
Had toll'd each silent inmate from his cell;
The hour was come to muse or pray,
Or work mysterious rites that shun the day:
My steps some whisp'ring influence led,
Up to yon pine-clad mountain's gloomy head:
Hollow and deep the gust did blow,
And torrents dart'd into the vales below.
At length the toilsome height attain'd,
Quick fled the moon, and sudden stillness reign'd.
As fearful turn'd my searching eye,
Glanc'd near a shadowy form, and fled by;
Anon, before me full it stood:
A saintly figure, pale, in pensive mood.
Damp horror thrill'd me till he spoke,
And accents faint the charm-bound silence broke:
"Long, trav'ler! ere this region near,
Say, did not whisp'rings strange arrest thine ear?"

My summons 'twas to bid thee come,
 Where sole the friend of Nature loves to roam.
 Ages long past, this drear abode
 To solitude I sanctified, and God :
 'Twas here by love of Wisdom brought,
 Her truest love, Self-knowledge, first I sought ;
 Devoted here my worldly wealth,
 To win my chosen sons immortal health.
 Midst these dun woods and mountains steep,
 Midst wild horrors of yon desert deep,
 Midst yawning caverns, wat'ry dells,
 Midst long, sequestered aisles, and peaceful cells,
 No passions fell distract the mind,
 To Nature, Silence, and Herself consign'd.
 In these still mansions who shall bide,
 'Tis mine, with Heaven's appointment, to decide ;
 But, hither, I invite not all :
 Some want the will to come, and more the call ;
 But all, mark well my parting voice !
 Led, or by chance, necessity, or choice
 (Ah ! with our Genius dread to sport),
 Sage lessons here may learn of high import.
 Know ! Silence is the nurse of Truth ;
 Know ! Temp'rance long retards the flight of Youth ;
 Learn here how penitence and pray'r
 Man's fallen race for happier worlds prepare ;
 Learn mild demeanour, void of art,
 And bear, amidst the world, the hermit's heart ;
 Fix, trav'ller ! deep this heaven-taught lore :
 Know Bruno brings it, and returns no more."
 (Half sighed, half smiled his long farewell),
 He turn'd, and vanish'd in the bright'ning dell.

The following letters, now printed for the first time, are {astonishing productions for a lad of seventeen or eighteen years of age. They show a deep love and keen appreciation of nature, and, even if some passages are flecked with affectations not unnatural to a young man wielding a maiden pen, taken as a whole they show the writer {as possessed of a vivid imagination born doubtless of the solitary musings to which reference is frequently made, and betray a command of language and of poetical description in which may be discerned the literary qualities of his subsequent writings. In the numerous allusions to characters in Oriental tales may be discerned the germs of "Vathek," and in his determination (stated very explicitly in the letter dated October 3, 1777) not to become the

ordinary well-to-do, idling man about town, may be seen the first idea that drew him to be author, collector, eccentric—anything but the frivolous butterfly of fashion.

THUN, *September 12th, 1777.*

It will be the full of the Moon this Night and I have a strong inclination to attain the summit of that huge mass of Rocks which form the Mountain of Salève. Those distant thickets, those dark forests of tall pines tempt me to walk amongst them. You will accompany me perhaps? Do you not long to tread the brow of that projecting fragment? Absolutely we must follow the course of that steep path, tho' indeed it seems only the province of Goats, neither Horse nor Mule can attempt such treacherous Road. However, we can leave our Hacknies at the Grove of Chesnut Trees and make the best of our way by clambering. It is rather late to be sure; but I *hope* you never look at your watch—Nay, do not ask where the Chesnut Grove is or how far off. I tell you it is at the foot of the Mountain.

Suppose us mounted and proceeding along a Road bordered by Hillocks and slopes clad with Vineyards and intermixed with old Walnut Trees of the most glossy green. This Road soon brings us to the Banks of the *Arve* which pursues its course between a narrow channel of steeps with uncommon Rapidity. The Sun declines apace and those Valleys at the foot of Salève begin to receive the mellow Tints of the Evening. Let us hasten forward or we shall miss the Sunset from the promontories we ogled from Thun. What an abominable Bridge! Never in my Life did I behold so crazy a composition. We must unlight and lead our Horses. Hark, what a rambling amongst the planks echoed by the cove! The trotting of my poor sober Mare becomes as stately as the paces of three managed Horses moderately speaking. A very good Mountain Bridge! I dare say none but such as *us* would admire its imperfections. A Forest of Ancient Chesnut Trees whose tattered branches dangle over some steep Banks affords us, however, a tolerable path over hung by Hazels, Vines, Barberries, and *Laburnums* that screen the prospect of the *Glaciers* and those distant peaks which you were so much delighted with a moment ago;

but look, a glimmer of sunshine at the end of that long alley, where the perspective meets, seems to indicate an open space—Let us emerge—What a Mountain Side!

FROM THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF SALÈVE

9. O'clock *Sept. 13th 1777.*

From whence do you think I date this Letter? Not from a neat precise Study, with a mahogany inlaid table, nicely lined with baze and placed in a central situation, having two Quires of gilt paper on my right hand, a silver ink-stand at my elbow, an almanack in a superb case, pens, pounce, wafers, dutch wax and all other implements, in abundance. Not one of these Circumstances. On the Summit of a lofty Mountain, I gaze at an Assemblage of substantial Vapours, which hover above, beneath and around me. This very sheet of paper which, barring accidents, I trust you will receive, is cast carelessly on a rugged fragment, mouldered from the peak of the Mountain, or torn from the bosom of its native Rock, by the Hand of an ancient Helvetian in defence of his Liberty. A Cot awkwardly put together just screens my head from the Wet Vapour, which seems to have fixed its Residence on these extensive Eminences. A flock of Goats, and a peasant, that looks as if he descended from *Pan* in a right line, stare at me with all their Eyes and all their Horns. Full five Hours have I waited the dissipation of this fog; but hark! a sullen rustling amongst the Forests far below which are intirely concealed by mists, proclaims that the North Wind is arisen. Look! the blasts begin to range thro' the Atmosphere! what majesty in those Volumes of gray cloud that sweep along, directing their course Eastward! Mark! they are succeeded by curling Volumes of blueish grey, like the smoke of a declining Volcano. How gently they bend and then fly downwards in a misty haze. What are those objects just emerging? horrid forms, like crucified Malefactors, start from the gloom, another blast discovers them in the Shape of weather beaten Oaks, whose fantastic branches have stood the brunt of Tempests for ages. A gleam of pale yellow light mellows the white surface of the boundless Cloud; before my Eyes it gives way; it seems to rock, it opens and

discloses a long line of distant Alps; but another cloud fleets from the North and closes the faint glimpse, which waves a moment and again opening, not only the Alps, but the Summits of the Woods appear. The Sun struggles with the vapours, the clouds chase one another; the white cloud so universal a moment ago is broken, it fleets, it dissipates; the Beams pierce the vapours on every side; long streaks of azure sky, partial prospects open like an Heaven; Rivers and extensive Regions all unfold; my senses are confounded, I know not where to fix my sight. See! the Lake appears, in all its azure glory. A boundless scene is unveiled, the creation of an instant. Objects crowd too swiftly for me to continue, I must abandon my pen and gaze. Five hours are elapsed! Hours of wonder and gratitude! I have been steeped in those sensations which arise from the contemplation of the great objects of Nature.

7. o'clock Eve: The mellow tints of the Evening begin to prevail. I shall wait the Moon ere I descend the Mountain—Half past 8.—Night draws on, the stars glow in the firmament. From the promontory of a Rock I overlook a vast extent of inhabited Country—the lights glimmer in a thousand Houses like the reflection of the Stars—The Moon appears—Farewell, I must descend the Mountain.

THUN, Oct. 3rd 1777.

To receive Visits and to return them, to be mighty civil, well-bred, quiet, prettily Dressed and smart is to be what your old Ladies call in England a charming Gentleman and what those of the same stamps abroad know by the appellation of *un homme comme il faut*. Such an Animal how often am I doomed to be! To pay and to receive fulsome Compliments from the Learned, to talk with modesty and precision, to sport an opinion gracefully, to adore Buffon and d'Alembert, to delight in Mathematics, logick, Geometry and the rule of Right, *the mal morale* and, *the mal physique*, to despise poetry and venerable Antiquity, murder Taste, abhor imagination, detest all the charms of Eloquence unless capable of mathematical Demonstration, and more than all to be vigorously incredulous, is to gain the reputation of good sound Sense. Such an Animal I am sometimes doomed

to be! To glory in Horses, to know how to knock up and how to cure them, to smell of the stable, swear, talk bawdy, eat roast beef, drink, speak bad French, go to Lyons, and come back again with manly disorders, are qualifications not despicable in the Eyes of the English here. Such an Animal I am determined not to be!—Were I not to hear from you sometimes, to see a Genius or two sometimes, to go to Voltaire's sometimes and to the Mountains very often, I should die—The Mountain from whose summit I wrote my last letter, is my chief comfort, and I resort to it once every Fortnight. It consists of two huge masses of Rock, separated by a chasm, the one called the Great, the other the Little Salève. No sooner do I reach the Summit than I leap off my Horse and spring into a Valley concealed as it were in the Bosom of the Mountain. There, two stupendous Rocks present an uninterrupted Range of Cliffs for about a quarter of a Mile, and the Vale between is formed by a smooth Lawn nicely fitted by the hand of Nature into every crevice. The opening at the farther end discovers a plain, at the foot of the precipice, quite even for the space of 15 Leagues and level all the way with the Lake, that together with a chain of Azure Mountains terminates the vast Horizon. How you would delight in the Stillness of this Valley. I think I behold you charmed with hearing nothing but the trickling of a small Rill that oozes out of the Rock, quite an Hermit's Spring, not large enough for wild Asses to lap—Then the fresh Underwood that extends on the right of the Dell under the lofty Cliffs would please you beyond expression; so green, so flourishing and mellowed by the gleams of the setting Sun. Lifted high above the Multitudes that swarm in the Plain, in a situation as placid as the present tone of my mind, I am thinking of England, recollecting all that has happened to me and remembering a thousand little circumstances about those that are absent and those that are *no more*. Next I am filled with Futurity. That Aweful Idea is attended by mystery and sublimity—They make me tremble. What will be my Life? what misfortunes lurk in wait for me? what Glory? This is the third time I have mused in this Valley at the hour of Sunset. To-day it is wonderfully clear, not a cloud darkens the boundless Range of my Prospect. Some

pebbles fall from the Rock. To it a Goat, no.—Two peasants descend from the Mountain where they have been felling the Fir-trees that grow under the topmost Peak. How exact these people are. Every time I have been here they have seen me at the same hour and I them. Were they poetical (which however is far from being their case) you would hear them say,

Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
While o'er the Vale we hied, our labour done,
Oft as the Woodlark piped her farewell Song
With wistful Eyes pursue the setting Sun.

A certain haze on the Lake denotes the close of day and a grey twilight begins to tarnish the clear transparence of the Skies. My thoughts are serene and tranquil. I regard the mild track of light where the Sun lost itself. Have you never wished to journey to the other Hemisphere with the Solar Orb?—The twilight gradually sinks into entire darkness. I see a feeble light at a distance, it passes thro' the dark thickets of Juniper, now it glimmers in the spring, and now it passes under the cove. Wicked deeds have been perpetrated in this valley many ages ago in the dark feudal Times; those years of Tyranny and Oppression. Yon taper is melancholly, were I superstitious I should fear the approach of something supernatural. . . . It comes nearer and nearer. The illusion is vanished and I see my good Friend the Village Priest and his attendant walking forwards with lights to conduct me to their habitation. I follow them. We pass thro' a wilderness of Shrubs that flourish in the rocky Soil and are obliged to go cautiously step by step, on account of the stumps of Oaks felled many Winters ago and the brambles that cleave round the stalks of the Fir tree. At length we arrive at the Village. A blazing fire marks out the Curé's house. It proceeds from the Appartment he has designed for me. I imagine a sort of Barn, wainscoted rudely with walnut, the floor covered, however, with a tolerable matting of straw, the cieling grossly sculptured and almost hid by quantities of Herb hung up to dry. Suppose a chimbney wide as the mouth of a whale. Fancy you hear the crackling of a dozen Billets of deal distilling rich turpentine and suppose you see a crucifix and a few ancient map Books on a shelf

above. Observe the portraits of some rueful Martyrs and altogether you will conceive an idea of the Room in one corner of which (I had forgot the most essential Article) you would not overlook a most exceeding high Bed, that formerly had been hung with Curtains, as you would judge from a few tatters that dangle from an iron rod. Our Supper, which was composed of Fish, Eggs and Herbs, was brought in by the same peasant that lighted us home, and whilst we were eating it the priest began a conversation about Heresy, in which I joined so emphatically as to make him believe he had a zealous Catholic for his Guest. What would I not give if you had been within hearing of the dismal tales he told of the Death of Unbelievers and those which Lucifer in the shape of Luther and Calvin had turned from the paths of Life. After exhausting this topic we fell heartily to relating Miracles and from that subject to Apparitions, Spectres, Goblins, Sorcerers, etc., till we both became frightened and did not continue our Stories, without many a Look behind above and about us. In this situation the Curé left me, as it was growing very late, and wonderful to tell, I was haunted by Bats instead of the Devil; but upon the whole contrived to sleep tolerably till 8 o'clock next morning when I mounted my Horse, took leave of the priest, descended the Mountain and arrived in 3 hours at Thun.

THUN, Oct. 6th, 1777.

I am indeed in a lovely Solitude. Our House is not large; but it has thick Walls and odd Windows that give it an antique Air I am fond of: besides, every piece of Furniture glistens with cleanliness. The Garden bears many a stately Sunflower and a profusion of Jessamine and is encircled by a Wood that shades two Rivulets which descend from the Mountains and gurggle in my retreat. Many a Day have I sat and mused on their rushy Brinks; when the Evening begins to close, started up running wildly across the Thickets, dropped down again in a Meadow that covers the side of an Hillock, fronting the Mountain of Salève, that Mountain! where I have spent so many Delightful, solitary Hours in thinking of you and all those that are worth thinking of.

GENEVA, Nov. 21st [1777].

The North wind prevails this Evening, the Gusts are bleak and raw, I will indulge the melancholly that has seized me and walk in the dusk of the twilight on the shore of the Lake. The vast Waters are troubled and the waves rush furiously on the Beach. How green are those Waves that course one another from afar off. Mark the stream of Light that skirts the Western Horizon. It casts a pale yellow gleam over the foaming surface of the Lake. Dark Clouds roll from the North and bring on the Night. I see lights at a distance moving towards the City; perhaps some one is there, who will direct me to the Gate. I call . . . ; but the bellowing of the tide deadens my Voice. I am alone on the Shore . . . dread is my situation. . . . The blasts increase and wistle dismally in my ears. I shudder. . . . What shriek was that?—no Bird is on the wing! . . . I must hasten home, and yet such is the darkness that I may wander for hours and not find the path that leads to the Gate next the port. I tremble, and of what am I afraid?—ah! too well I know what means those shades, for surely I beheld something flit before me pale as the Ashes of an Altar. Something roze on a Wave and sighed. See it rears itself again and moans—it moans.—O how am I deceived or that shade wears the resemblance of one that is no more and that was most dear to me . . . cruel illusion. Think, another wave rose, foamed at my feet, cast its spray on high and offered to my affrighted Imagination a form like yours.

And what fatal conclusion must I draw. You have kept me a sad long time in suspense, not a line have I received these two months. Could I have thought you would have dealt thus with me? What! not one notice of your having received the last effusions of my fancy? . . . You are neglectful or you are . . . dreadful thought to one who esteems you like me.

Struck to the heart with that idea I ran or rather flew to the City. Chance directed me to the Gate just as it was about to close for the whole Night. I hurried thro' it and entered our House (which was as it generally is full of company) scared with sorrow, shivering with cold and cursing the North wind. The people crowded round me,

and asked me where I had been? I answered, to the Devil. They half believed me from my air. I grew peevish and wished them there. Then they fell to teasing me to play at cards, complimenting of me and telling me there was Monsieur *This* and Madame *T'other* who were come in purpose to hear me say clever things *forsooth*. I told them I never said any such kind of things. They replied, *pardonnez-moi*. They hoped I would play on the pianoforte, not at all, I never touched such an Instrument; besides my fingers were frozen. A great fat bundlesome Lady took the hint, seized and dragged me to the stove, in short I was so worried that I whirled out of the Room, banged the Door, ran upstairs, and knocked my shins against a lean Valet de Chambre who was limping up with a smoking Turkey, for the supper of those Animals that had perplexed me so. After all these disasters I jumped into Bed, could not sleep; but listened till I heard the jovial Crew that had seized me, moving off between 12 and 1, thinking me mad in all *human* probability. At length I fell asleep: my dreams were mournful. The shore of the Lake with all its gloom hovered before my fancy. I might say with great truth,

It was a dismal and a fearful Night,
 Scarce could the Morn drive on th' unwilling light
 When Sleep, Death's Image, left my troubled breast,
 By something liker Death possessed.
 My Eyes with tears did uncommanded flow
 And on my Soul hung the dull weight
 Of some intolerable Fate.

Do these Bodings mean anything? If you felt what I do (and yet you do feel like me almost universally) you would not let me remain in so woeful an uncertainty. I am not happy nor shall I be so till I receive a packet from you. . . .

[GENEVA], Nov. 24th [1777].

✓ I was walking this Morning in a meadow near the Gates of the Town, which sloped gently to the margin of the Lake. A wood glowing with all the variegated Tints of Autumn, screened the view of the City from my eyes, which were anxiously fixed on a Road by which arrive all those that come from England. At a distance I perceived one approaching with tired Horses who, alighting before an

Inn that belongs to Dejean, the Father of the Geneva Carrier, made me think it was the person who brought with him the paquet from you. It was—judge of my pleasure when he delivered me a Roll which, upon being unfolded, discovered the august visage of the Genius of the Alps. Every feature is smoked with the serenity of an inhabitant of the upper Regions. Your Letter, breathing the spirit of excellence and sending forth sparks of the sacred fire which eternally burns on the Altar of Genius, filled me with pleasing Sensations and confirmed me in the sincerity of your Friendship. The Elegy was truly in earnest. It was written immediately after receiving some very melancholly news? Not a circumstance in it is exaggerated; the night it was composed agreed perfectly in gloom and darkness with the State of my Mind. . . .

Have you forgot that the Duchess of Queensberry died last Summer? . . . Inform me what part of my writings you read to Ld. Morton?

Could I have imagined any person so penetrated with the same rays as you are with those that transfix me? Strange, very strange, that such a perfect conformity should subsist. All your Letters were deposited in a Drawer lined with blue, the colour of the Aether. Reserve with care your System of sentimental Gardening, the time may come perhaps when we shall execute it.

Yes, that time may arrive when we may seek the green solitudes and roam about foreign Mountains, when we may sit together in such a Valley as I have described and gaze at the last gleams of departing Day. How should I delight to wander with you thro' remote Forests and pitch our Tents by Moonlight in a Wilderness. Then would we observe the Deer bounding over the Lawn and the Goats frisking on the margin of a Stream without a wish to disturb their happiness.

Neither the Gun, the Arrow or the Net should be in our hands. We would cultivate some pastures and in the season gather ripe Corn sown by ourselves. Every week we would vary our abode and sleep upon Hills in the twilights of Midsummer, there to catch the Dream of inspiration from whence to presage the events of future Times.

Every plant that springs from the Rock, or that floats on the surface of the Water would be familiar to us, nor

would the virtues of Herbs be hidden from our knowledge. Why might we not penetrate into unknown Regions, long concealed from the eye of Man? Might we not arrive in new Countries by following the course of Rivers and tracing them thro' all their windings to their Source? Our Barks should be driven by the current of the Stream; never should we steer them, unless we heard Cataracts roaring from afar. Then should we retire into a Bay amongst the Spice Groves and, felling tall Trees, form a fence to guard us from the Monsters that prowl nightly in the Woods. Thus secured we would visit our Camels and the attendants of our journey. These we would treat gently and having kindled a prodigious Fire carouse and feast around its blaze. Perhaps a Nation of Savages would spy its smoke at a distance and might say amongst themselves, No marriage is celebrated to-Night in our Nation, nor have we conquered the proud *Catoquilqui* who boast their lineage from the Morning Star. What means then this tinkling of Cymbals, these shouts of exultation and yonder sparks that indicate a triumphant Fire? Let every Man cast his Belt over his Shoulder and arm himself with his Sling. Let our Women follow as near as our Steps are distinguishable and let not the Maize be forgotten, nor full Bowls of the juice of the *Saca*. One of those who watch over the security of our repose would hear the fleet of a multitude descending the Slopes of a *Savannah* in the silence of the Night and, sounding his shrill Clarion, rouse us from our Slumbers. Immediately our faithful attendants would flock to our Tent and ranging themselves around seize their Lances. Some adding fuel to the burning Embers would renew the Flame that, gleaming on the Slopes, would discover the train advancing with Solemnity. Their countenances are not ferocious, should I say to you, nor has their deportment the stride of Destruction. I will order the casket of Beads to be opened and the Chest that contains implements of Iron. Fritz shall show them their Use. By laying our hands on our hearts, pointing to our Lances cast on the Ground, offering the freight of our Camels and humbling ourselves courteously before the possessors of the Land, the Savages might also cast away their Slings and retiring to the right and left give place to the Females bearing the Bowls of plenty. You then perhaps would

take your Lute and make sweet harmony, an harmony breathing benevolence understood even by the rude Tribes that rove from Lake to Lake and from Valley to Valley. Next would succeed the Dance, the clang of Instruments and universal joy. Our hearts would be dilated and we should join in the wildest expressions of our feelings; but to whom am I exposing these romantic Ideas of living in Tents upon the produce of the Earth and straying thro' such tracks of Woodlands? Am I addressing myself to a Spirit that catches fire at my own Enthusiasm? If there exists one that would partake such a wild excursion it is yours—Come then and explore with me the polar Climates of the western Continent; but can you, after having experienced the Southern Warmth, after rioting in the luxuriance of the tropics, advance into the cold North and leave behind the Sun of Vegetation? Will you not shudder when the last Shrub sinks on the Horizon, when you find yourself following the track of the *Elk* over wastes of Snow: the Skies streaming with the angry colours of the northern Aurora? Can you divest yourself of the sublime horror which overwhelms you on first beholding this mysterious Light and, delivered up to all the Solitude and silence of the Pole, dare calmly to pry into its cause? Shall we with *Halley* regard it as the effect of magnetism, with *Meyer* and *Rowning* kindle an assemblage of exhalations or with *Meron* call down light from the fixed Stars? And when we had thus pursued Nature till she was almost extinguished, might we not fancy ourselves approaching the Country of *Odin* and think we distinguished thro' the Mist of Blood that fills the Horizon, his Ministers, the Gigantic *Valkyriur* shooting along with the Souls of the Brave to his *Valhalla*?

If you wish to be further acquainted with the *Valkyriur* read Gray's Ode called The Fatal Sisters and notice particularly the remarks upon it in Mason's Edition: then you will observe that these Personages were enough to scare the Devil without a mist of blood.

Should you be willing to familiarise yourself with the *Valhalla* I must refer you to a Book published in 1770 entitled Northern Antiquities. It is a translation from the French of Professor Mallet with whom I am very intimate and to whom I talk of you and the *Valkyriur* alternately; but, in case you should not meet

with these Antiquities in a hurry, I may as well tell you that the *Valhalla* is the Hall or Paradise of Odin sparkling with Lamps and adorned with Buffets that are garnished with Skulls out of which the Souls of Heroes drink. I must forget neither a curious Circumstance which is, that [while] these poor Souls have the satisfaction of hacking one another to pieces every day and every Night, they have the pleasure of finding themselves all whole and sound again; and, having got an excellent appetite by killing one another, sit down amicably and sociably to smoking, roasted Boars which are constantly served up by young smirking Damsels who put about the Skulls and fill them with entire Butt-Beer as often as ever they call for it. Are not these rare pleasant Ideas and worth dying to realise? . . .

I have but a very scanty portion of my time to write my Centrical (?) History, so numerous are my Acquaintance, most of them—Heaven knows—how different from us! Delivered up to a Sword, Bag and pretty Cloathes, I am obliged to go dangling about to assemblies of sweet dear, prim tulipy variegated Creatures, oppressed with powder and pomatum, and tired with the lisping nonsense I hear all around me. Fifty times have I wished myself amongst all the Bears of the Pole. At home I am infested with a species which, like mathematical points, have neither *parts* nor magnitude—Alas fat Bulls of Basan encompass me around.—Tubs upon two legs, crammed with Stupidity, amble about me. Some of them mere trivets and Footstools, supple, pliant, and complaisant; others people of good sound sense and solid Aquirements.

I love to bark a tough Understanding, it is much better than to be always peeling Willows—Nothing then gives me more pleasure than a good mouthing Dispute with such as these.

[GENEVA], De. 19th, 1777.

And so we have had a report of plague, pestilence and Famine, the Gates guarded and the Devil to pay at Geneva. All old women and such like in a fluster. The end of the world denounced in form; for the infection was brought by a Jew. Who could he be but the Antichrist? Do not the Wars in America savour of this period in the bargain? Something red was seen on the

Mont-blanc yesterday Evening; pray what could that be but the scarlet Whore of Babylon? And a great noise was heard last Night ay ay—nothing less than the galloping of the Beasts in the Apocalypse—to be sure *les Bêtes curieuses du Bon Dieu* as the impious call them.

De. 22nd.

Our prophecies are averted and the end of the World deferred to another opportunity.

GENEVA, De. 25th, 1777.

What may very well be called a Dedication.

You ought to be extremely cautious to whom you show the long Story, for certain I am the greatest number of readers would despise, ridicule or make neither head nor Tail of it. They would probably exclaim—what can these high flown descriptions of Grottos and Glittering Forms and Beings and Bramins mean! and the Dwarfs too—a charming set of little Fellows who to use a New-market expression are literally got down in the *Devil's Ditch and nowhere*.

All that concerns the Sanctuary is too *solemn* and *sacred* to be prophaned. The subject is very grave and serious. When I reflect that you see and feel the Scenes and the actions I describe, their being concealed from eyes in general does not at all concern me. It is to you then that I deliver up my work, and it is in your Bosom that I deposite it. . . . Your approbation is to me the approbation of a Multitude. It is all I desire and all I seek for in venturing to commit to writing the inspirations of my Fancy, those pleasing Dreams in which perhaps consist the happiest moments of the Life of

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY

[Undated.]

I have spent few minutes more agreeably than in reading your charming Letter, my dear Sister. You have transported me to P. Charles's Palace. I mounted with you the white marble staircase entered the eating room, and admired the Death of Seneca you pointed out. You would not stay long to examine the profusion of

Pictures that covered the Room, so I followed you thro the Suite of Apartments remarkable for the richness of their Furniture, crossed the Dome and traversing the long narrow passage on which I bestowed but little attention ascended the Staircase which brought me to the Gallery decorated with one of the finest collections of China in Europe. My Sight was dazzled and perplexed with the variety of Vases, pagodas and paralitic mandarins that quivered on every side, all glowing with gold purple and every gorgeous colour. I was just beginning a dissertation upon the splendour of the Chinese Palaces, the pomp of their processions and the grotesque wildness of their imaginations, when you desired me in the name of Taste to forbear and cried out, For God's Sake, William, leave the contemplation of plates and dishes, what will people think if these are the objects that chiefly attract your attention ; besides it grows late and we have really no time to lavish upon a Teapot or to waste on the inspection of a squalling Top. I very reluctantly moved off from the Pillars of Porcelain and could not help stopping again to examine a huge vase

Where China's gayest art had dyed the azure flowers that grow.

At last to your great joy we got out of the Gallery, and a change of scene delivered you from the legendary tales I was beginning to relate about the Japanese Idols. The awful name of Quandacaendono was half out of my mouth when the instruments in P[rince] C[harles]'s Bedchamber, and the view discovered from his windows diverted my attention ; but this calm was of short duration for upon the opening of a door which discovered a very brilliant cabinet, the Chinese rage got uppermost and you thought I should expose myself again by the ardour and vehemence with which I praised the room, running now to one group of hideous images and then to another exclaiming all the while. There's your Japan of the true rain, look at the delightful strange form of these artificial Rocks that bulge out of the panels, only see that dear mimping creature that fans herself on the side of a Lake covered with water flowers. Surely she is one of the ten Princesses that trim the hallowed whiskers of the sacred Dairo. Look, Sister, that great spreading bush is loaded with the fruit of the

Mihisho that flourishes near the Plains of Nagasaki, these corpulent reptiles that I confess look a little like toads are the Quoohecachi that hop in the profound fosses of the Castle of Azuchiyama. These blossoms I take to belong to the Mokurege or Molybm wha or at farthest the Oudonge. In vain would you beseech me to defer all this out of the way learning for another time, in vain would you intreat me to check the career of such contemptible erudition. Nothing would hinder me from making eternal digressions about the Country in which these ornaments are fabricated and talking for ever about the lofty Mountains of Fukenzosama, not forgetting the sixty Convents of Bonzes that are placed on its brow, with tedious detail of all the gardens amongst which they are situated and the cascades that tumble from the Rocks into the Valley below. You tried to make me observe the Cabinet in general, the rich effect of the glasses, the inlaid floor, the ivory house and in short the tout ensemble; but the Japan had touched that spring which never fails of sending me to China in the twinkling of an eye, so the same subject was continued all the way thro' the State Rooms and the Gold Salle de Campagnio whose elegant gilding and stately windows I scarce deigned to regard, but now since I have surveyed the whole Palace and am at present got out into the open air again the charm is broken, the illusion dissolved, all the splendid objects vanished and I find myself at a sad distance from you in one of the Towers of the lonely Castle of de Pranyacis. The melancholy Lake under my windows and the Alps extended in dreary perspective on its opposite shore. When I first cast my Eyes on the last part of your Letter I expected to find an elegant delicate figure represented in the enclosed paper but fancy my surprise when it disclosed the greasy smirking visage of my Lady Lum. She is in every feature a heavenly creature, so lovely a nose, so fair a chin so bewitching smile I never beheld. I think I may affirm we have nothing in so superlative a style at Geneva. I continue reading Dante with all my might and Ariosto with all my main: but indeed the first mentioned poet describes such tremendous objects that it is with difficulty that I can dwell upon them. You can never imagine more dreadful scenes; livid Lakes, caverns whose craggs and roofs are hung

with Serpents and regions where hope never enters is the dismal subject of the finest part of his poem. What can be more dire than the beginning of the Canto

Per me si va nella città dolente :
 Per me si va nell' eterno dolore :
 Per me si va tra la perduta gente.

He must have been an uncomfortable wretch to have placed some of the best people that ever existed in this horrid Gulph. I was quite sorry to meet here the patriarchs for whom I had imbibed such veneration and to find wandering along the Dark shores of the River of Death, the Spirits of Moses and David, the Man after God's own heart, but our Author's mind seems to have been tinchered with the blackest superstition and been badly versed in theological matters and having invited all the Sculptor's notions of his time it is no wonder that his inferno swarms with the noblest love that ever animated human form. I would never advise you to read him as you will meet with nothing but gloomy ideas. Indeed you know one of the most striking and most horrible cantos where C. Ugolino's Death is but too excellently described. I think it is quite time to leave Dante and all his horrors far behind and let me talk to you about Petrarch. He is melancholy too, but pens it in so gentle and so amiable manner that Ariosto with all his sprightliness is often less captivating. What Reflection there is in his ideas and how feelingly are they expressed. Are you not charmed with the soft languor that prevails in many of his Sonnets? The descriptions glow neither as in the lustre of the Sun or the blaze of Jewels but are tinged with such hues as are reflected from the Woods and Waters. In them we find neither gaudiness nor glare nor these false images which, tho' brilliant, disgust by their extravagance and claim but a moment's admiration. His poetry has a more lasting impression over the mind and puts it into the tone of reflection. You see I shall want nothing to enshrine Petrarch amongst my poetic Idols. You please me by telling me that you carry the English Classics with you. You must think you are bearing your household Gods and esteem it sacrilege to be without them. I think you have reason to be grateful to these tutelary Deities and as I daresay you owe to them the enjoyment of many happy hours, I shall no longer preach to you to divert yourself for with your taste it is impossible

to know a moment of ennui. No person can wish you finally settled more than myself, for I feel by sympathy how disagreeable a roving life must be. There is nothing I should dislike more than not having (as you observe) a spot I call my own and an habitation however simple that I could shut myself up in when I please and in which I could change one thing and alter another just as my fancy suggested. I am well aware of the pleasure you would have in finding out some snug retirement where you might totally give yourself up to the education of your Children and the improvement of your mind, where you might ramble about and come back again and in short be as free as the air you breathe, where you might have a good instrument, plenty of books, and a cheerful view. If I was in a romantic mood and not in a serious one I would introduce a rippling stream, some bleating sheep and a high rock, to conceal you and my nephews from any intrusion. But yet if you will not think me too fanciful I will continue singing the praises of a retreat and the comfort of solitude. Absolutely I must recite a few lines of my favorite Gray with whose elegance and merit you are well acquainted :

Humble Quiet builds her cell,
Near the source where pleasure flows;
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
And tastes it as it goes.

If you are of my way of thinking you will find Nancy too turbulent, but Colonel Hamilton will display its merits and demerits better than me. The 3rd and 4th part of your Novel pleased me as much as the 1st and 2nd. The situations are happily contrived and the characters equally well kept up. I have no time to say half I would about it, for I hear Musick in the long Gallery of the Castle that summons me to Supper. What would I not give for you to see this strange edifice especially at Night when its vast Halls and winding passages are just visible by the light of expiring fires. It is then that I frequently pace along the deserted apartments, listen to the murmurs of the Lake and mark the Owls shrieking from the battlements of the Gateway. It is at these moments I recollect all that has happened to me, lament those Friends that are no more and cast a trembling look towards Futurity. Adieu.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to HON. EDMUND PHIPPS

GENEVA, Jan. 12, 1778.

My fingers are eight degrees below freezing point, which same point is at present my Nose. Judge then whether I shall be able to send you either a long or an entertaining Epistle. By the Alps you would shudder were you to cast yr. Eyes over as dismal a project as that which at present lies extended before my Windows. Nothing but Mountains beyond Mountains, and Peaks beyond Peaks, all covered with an universal uninteresting Garment of Snow.—Heavens preserve me from such a scurvy climate, say I. How I wish for Dr. Solander or some such personage to talk to me about the delightful Climate of the Tropics, your Groves of Cocoas and Bananas, and your fair little Highty-touty Ladies skipping about under their shade.—And so you are going to commence an Action about yr. Studies, and intend prosecuting them with a vengeance mighty well. Pray summon all the old Grecians to your assistance and serve Dr. Warburton and his divine Legation of Moses with a writ; but literally, joking and fooling apart, do you intend setting at the good things of the Church? If you do, I make no doubt but that the brawn of Prebendaries and the collops of good Bishoprics will drop into your Mouth. You will not be surprised at these gormandising Similes when I tell you I exist amongst a set whose only method of keeping out the cold is by cramming their mouths as full as ever they can stuff. In vain does London boast her Turtullians, in vain does she glory in her men of Paunch; Geneva, if possible, outdoes her outdoings and for *throatular* expeditions stands unparalleled. I have the honour of appearing at Suppers *ad infinitum* where those hardy Republicans display. Their daily Advertizer is filled with ways and means to facilitate the eater Powers: for example, De la Rosée de Vie et de Santé, contre les abattement d'Estomac . . . renvoie degouts, coliques, vents, indigestions, bonne pour fortissier les Vieillards.

I certainly think we talk here much more about America than you do in London. Really it is so rueful a topic and there is so little good to be said of it that it is best to be silent. I am obliged to break off in the midst

of my political disquisitions for the *Traineau* is waiting for me, and I am just going to whisk across the Ice to a little Savoyarde Village situated among woods of pines that twinkle with Icicles. Adieu, I can but just beg you to write immediately, and to conclude in a hurry by assuring you of the sincerity with which I remain

Your affectionate,

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY

GENEVA, *Ja.* 19th, 1778.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I am very glad indeed that the Letter I sent to Maestricht has reached you at Bruscelles, for I would not, for the World, have had you imagine that at this moment of all others I possessed the idea of forgetfulness. Heaven knows how happy I was at receiving a very obliging Letter from Mr. Hervey, which gave me reason to hope that your Spirits had very rarely deserted you. Certain I am, my dear Sister, that you always had an elevation of thought which makes you regard a thousand circumstances as minute, which to most others would have appeared gigantic. This consideration I confess has been of great service to me, for it has made me think of you frequently with the greatest satisfaction, whereas did I not know you possessed that serenity of mind capable of dispelling the troubles that may hover around you, your remembrance would have been attended by innumerable uncomfortable reflections. At present—I think of you, of your Children, of everything that belongs to you, in a manner that, could I describe, would present no unpleasing Picture of the affectionate sentiments with which I am penetrated. Let me, I conjure you, advise as much dissipation as possible, that is, as much distraction as conveniently lies in your way. Amuse your imagination continually give it full scope, and let Buildings, Pictures, Characters fleet before your Eyes. Vary eternally the Scene—I mean of your reflections. Occupy yourself very much. Draw, read entertaining works, write, have recourse to Musick, go to Mass—do anything but be melancholy. I know you will laugh (at least I hope you will) at my idea of sending you to Mass for consolation ;

but if there are any very striking and magnificent Churches at Bruscelles, the spectacle will be new and imposing. I have heard there are some pretty Pictures to be seen in your Town, chiefly I suppose in private collections. I reckon very greatly upon the amusement Antwerp will afford you. To a person whose taste is, like yours, quite alive to objects of an elegant nature, that place must charm your attention in a very great degree, which is full of the most famous paintings that continually offer themselves to your imagination. Let me beg you to examine them as much, and, if you can, to think as fully about them as if you was travelling on a Scheme of idle amusement. My fancy is the only part of me which is at present able to travel, for we are on all sides hemmed in by Mountains entirely whitened with Snow which is about three feet deep everywhere.

My Imagination I say then has been following Ariosto thro' all the wild excursions of his enchanting poetry, thro' Forests of Oaks in Caledonia and thro' Woods of Citron and myrtle in the groves of India, now stalking across the Mountains of Spain. One moment descending into the cells of enchantment and at another diving into the very depths of the Ocean, wandering amongst corralines and sporting amidst all the treasures which the Sea has swallowed. Sometimes rising into the Aether and winging its rapid course to the very Moon, there discovering a thousand quaint conceits and pleasant phantasies imagined with such originality as has thrown me into astonishment. Surely those must have every feeling of Genius blunted who are not seized with a kind of enthusiasm upon reading such an assemblage of beautiful Fictions, delivered with such eloquence, with such prodigality of rich imagery and with such numbers as soothe the Ear with an harmony not to be found, I think, in almost any other Language. Do you not recollect a good many years ago, when I was a very small Animal, and when you studied Italian with great avidity, how frequently you used to recount to me the strange adventures, pompous Descriptions and marvellous Histories you found in this Author. You remember, I daresay, with what eagerness I listened to your narrations and with what ardour I wished to read the original from which you extracted such charming Episodes. Judge then of the delight with which I renewed my acquaintance

with Astolpho and the pleasure I took in recovering my long lost Rugiero, his Hippogriff and the Castle of Steel. You will be surprised when I tell you that in so short a space as two Months I have almost finished Ariosto, have read the best part of Dante, have translated two Books of the Gerusalemme Liberata, and can speak Italian with ease; in short I should wonder myself at the progress I have made, did not the ardour, the application and the joy with which I read or rather devour Orlando Furioso in some measure account for it. But however, I had ever a hankering after that Language, and having learnt the Grammars of several others, the difficulty was by no means considerable.

Voltaire has asked me to spend two or three Days at Ferney; he adores, worships and glorifies Ariosto as well as myself so we shall agree very [well] I believe, and as soon as the Snow takes itself away I shall set off. At present that I have no Mountains to resort to or lovely prospects to describe, when every object is buried in Snow and every Fir Tree glistening with Icicles, wonder not that I have recourse to the imaginations of others to entertain you; for really my own is so deadened by the Season, so gloomified by uniformly dull Weather, that literally, without the assistance of my Italian poetry and the pleasing recollections of those hours I used to pass in hearing you admire its vagaries (for by what other appellation can one call the stories in general of my adorable Ariosto) this Epistle would, I believe, exceed in dulness even those which you have before received from me.

The way of living at Geneva is far from gay; but in return it is very improving. The Societies are composed of so many clever people that notwithstanding a certain form and solemnity that prevails in them, they do not altogether displease me. Another circumstance I like, is the number of original Characters to be met with here. In the first rank of these, shines my Friend Huber whose particular excellence would be very hard to discover, as he is as changeable as the wind and sometimes as boisterous. One day he wanders with his Faucons over Hill and Dale, marsh and river, wood and garden; the next, shut up in his Cabinet he will reflect on the nature of the Universe and the first principle of all things. The following week

perhaps he is totally engaged in drawing caricatures and saying the queerest drollest things imaginable, and if he writes during this humour, probably it will be a dissertation upon the nature of Cats' whiskers. See him the day after this whim has left him and you will find a profound Musician, composing *Misereres* and declaiming Recitative with all the taste and judgment of an eminent professor. Whilst this rage lasts he holds forth with all the energy of an ancient Bard and is generally poetical. It is during this Fit we exult in the glories of Ariosto and Shakespeare, give a loose to our imaginations and repeat whole passages by heart in so vociferous a style as makes all the Auditors stare again and say the Devil has left the Swine to possess us. A few hours elapse. Come and you will find him in a coarse jacket feeding his Birds of prey, all over filthiness and garbage. His hands . . . are far too nasty to dwell upon; but should you just observe their *delicacy* he would answer, *en passant*, *Ah, si vous voyez mes pieds!*

The next Night very likely he would be seen sunk in his Arm chair by the Fire side covered with snuff and strewing it about whenever he moves, quite marking his track. He is now as indolent as you please and seems to have forgot all that activity of Mind and Body for which he is sometimes so remarkable. He will now read nothing but romances and if anybody comes in speak Spanish. Those who have been with him once before, perhaps at the time he talked of the government of providence and other topics of the gravest cast, might wish to take up the conversation again, and put him once more upon such subject. Let them question him a little—it will be all in vain. He will gape and whistle and pick his teeth and stir the Fire. Suppose they persevere. He continues so obstinate that at last quite impatient they ask if he ever heard of the *Etre Suprême*. With all the *sang froid* and gravity conceivable he will answer, *Oui, j'ai entendu dire du bien de lui*. By the day after the scene is shifted and you will converse with a very reasonable Being, a little singular indeed, but upon the whole as pleasing as you can imagine. His conversation is now elegant and in what the French call *un ton cavalier*, perfectly well-bred, attentive and obliging, may be tho' a little sneering; but that only when the Company is very plaguing and composed *des Gens qui*

se flanquent d'esprit. If he has diverted himself well in the Day either by Falconry, engraving, music, writing, etc. etc., you will find him delightful in the Evening, serene, full of agreeable ideas, Ideas that breathe the most delicate sensibility. It is then he will talk of the adventures of his Youth, recount his rambles thro' Italy and describe the various scenes that have just passed before his eyes. His descriptions are covered with more vivacity and affect me in a degree superior to any I have ever heard, and probably they would produce on you a similar effect. I would continue tracing this Genius thro' all his windings and following him thro' the labyrinth of his ideas and occupations in hopes to afford you some amusement but it would be as easy to pursue a Meteor or to Morris after that dancing exhalation which our Country Folks call the Will o' the Wisp.

There are more strange Animals at Geneva besides the one I have attempted to say something about; but there were none so wonderful. You must live with Huber, to be able to discern his real perfection, and I greatly fear I have sent you but a very feeble Sketch. However, I trust you will excuse my not being able to divert you in the Winter.

Adieu, Dr. Sister, I am ever your most aff.

W. B.

AIX EN SAVOY, June 5, 1778.

Have you ever read the Lives of the Fathers of the Deserts? If you have, I am confident it was with pleasure. St. Bruno's in particular made a very deep impression on me and I solemnly vowed after reading it again and again, to visit the Spot he consecrated to religious Tranquillity, where he raised the Monastery of the *Grande Chartreuse* so long and so deservedly famous. My View was shortly put into execution and to-day I set out on my Pilgrimage.

The Morning by no means smiled on my Enterprise. The *Mont Salève* was covered with grey Clouds, the Lake with vapours and the Plains with mists; but I had sworn to set forward and it was not in the power of the Elements to deter me.

Happily we did not enter into further contest, for when

I reached Frangy, a little Village about five or six leagues from Geneva, the black clouds were rolling away and the blue Sky began to be visible. Here I was obliged to stop for an hour or two, and then after ascending and descending a steep Hill pursued my route thro' several Valleys shaded by flourishing groves of Walnut Trees and watered by the *Arve*. After crossing a cultivated Plain I heard the roar of some considerable Torrent, and, approaching nearer and nearer to the woodlands from whence the Sound proceeded, was startled at the sight of a deep cleft dividing another wide extended Valley—probably rent by some dreadful Earthquake. A Stream rushes turbulently from the distant Hills and fills this rocky Channel along which it hurries with a loud bellowing.

The Slender withered Trees which hang over it on one side and the tall Mountain Ash which springs from the Cliffs on the other have a fine effect, nor is the dark colour of the rocks opposed to the Silver brightness of the Stream less pleasing. I leaned a long while on the barrier of a Bridge which crosses the Precipice and gazed on the dark Gulph, on the foaming waters and the Lights reflected from the variegated Sky with great delight and wished you was with me to enjoy them. A few miles on we came to the Bridge of Cope consisting of one bold Arch, thrown over the same torrent we had crossed before and soon after passing thro' *Rumilly* traversed a beautiful plain bounded on every side by Mountains as varied as a picturesque Eye could desire and above whose Summits rise the distant Glaciers in all their majesty. The Country here seems created for us to wander and roam about in. We should be charmed for months with its Peaks, its verdure and its Lawns. We should gaze with transport [on] Fifty Sun-sets at the distant Glaciers which have appeared this Evening in full glory. A dark blue Cloud which traversed their Base (at least what seemed their base from here) looked as if it sustained them in the Air. The Rays of the sun striking on their pinnacles lent them all the pomp of aerial palaces; their distance gave full scope to the Imagination and allowed it to form a thousand conjectures. I kept my eyes fixed on these brilliant objects till the Clouds roll'd over them and closed a scene which had inspired me with a train of magnificent ideas.

I was totally rapt up in them till to my great surprise the Coach stopped at *Aix*, where the impertinent bustle of the place and the stench of the Baths soon convinced me that I was in the midst of our *rare* World again, and very sorry I was to have finished my excursion into the other.

LES ECHELLES, *June 6th* [1778].

The Sun had but just appear'd above the Mountains when we left *Aix* and in a few hours reached *Chambéry*, a Town very little worth talking to you of, being full of Piedmontese Officers and Smarts or such as would be so if they could. Vile dirty Streets and ill built Convents; fat lazy Monks and sauntering Abbés, in short all kinds of Stupidity; and to mention a water drinking place about a league and a half from the Town where all Idlers (and these are plentiful) go dreaming along with their umbrellas, exhibiting as stupid a set of Mortals as one shall see on a Summer's day. I need not tell you my stay was of no very long continuance in this charming City; but it was impossible to stir with any pleasure till the Evening. About an hour or two before Sun-set we set forward thro' many woody valleys, whose thick shades frequently concealed the Mountainous Country which formed them. The Noontide Air was delightfully refreshing after so Hot a day and the sight of so many groves and thickets contributed to relieve the Eye tired with the bareness of Rocks and the barren, but majestic prospect of Mountains.

We were within three leagues of *Les Echelles* when we began to ascend the side of a long range of Mountains almost entirely covered with Trees and Pastures. My Attention was chiefly attracted by the pinnacles of Rock which edged our Road and threatened every Instant to block it up for ever. They had indeed as rude and as menacing an appearance as any pile of Houses could possibly assume, and I could not help feeling a degree of apprehension whilst we passed under their projecting Masses. This Succession of pointed Rocks stretched out the approach to a very singular Object in a striking manner, for we had left them but a few paces behind, when, upon looking up at the Cliffs, we perceiv'd a full Torrent pouring down with all its might from the Forests

which shaded their brow. As we advanced, our Road kept winding along a green Lawn at the end of which we beheld the vast Waters throwing themselves from the woody precipices into a profound chasm. I ran instantly to its edge and stood petrified for a quarter of an hour without uttering a syllable. When I recovered from my first amazement I found myself [drenched] by the spray and was obliged to take refuge in a Cave worn in the side of the Cliff. Before me stood a mossy Rock on which I leaned. High above rose a line of perpendicular Rocks mantled with Woods from whence rush'd the Torrent, which after striking twice against opposite fragments of the Mountain, fell at least four hundred feet into a Black Fissure down whose recesses I ventured a look and then retired. When I had retreated about a hundred yards I lay down on the Turf under the covert of the Shrubs which flourish'd around and, turning myself towards the Fall, marked the first glimpse of the Waters as they issued from the Woods on high, traced them tumbling down the steep and followed their tumultuous Course till it disappeared among the Fissures beneath. The verdure of the Lawn on which I lay was inexpressibly beautiful. Moistened by the spray of the descending Waters it retains the freshness of Spring in the heats of Summer and being illumined by the beams of the setting sun, shooting aslant a sloping wood, presented one of the most lovely Pictures I ever beheld. This Landscape, tho' grand and striking, is far from being characterised by that awful and gloomy Solemnity which constitutes the sublime. On the contrary its parts are noble and considerable, without being imposing. The cheerful sunny exposition of the Lawn, the lightness and brilliancy of its verdure and the vivacity of several inconsiderable Rills which sparkle rather than foam, diffuses an air of gaiety which greatly diminishes the effect of the main torrent, whose banks being clad with flowers and browsed by Cattle, seem rather to invite than repulse the Travellers, who are continually passing before them, offering a cool delightful retreat after the Sultriness of a Summer Journey. No broken pines or shattered Fragments indicate devastation. The scene is far more tranquil than might be expected in the neighbourhood of so considerable a Torrent and, if its roar was not alarming to those unaccustomed

to such Sounds, might be chosen for an agreeable Habitation.

It was with reluctance I quitted these pure Waters and the Woods which surround them and shall long cherish the idea of returning to them some future day and pitching my Tents on the Lawn.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY

FETERNE, 1778.

We were a long while confined between the fields of corn and tracks of pastures, whose lofty flourishing Hedge rows hindered the splendid prospects of the Lake and the majestic peaks of the Mountains from intruding upon the sober character and pastoral simplicity of the Scene. We were just beginning to divert upon the state of Cultivation in this part of Savoy, when the sudden discovery of a deep romantic Valley, a range of White Cliffs partly mantled with luxuriant Shrubs, a Mountain whose base was shaded by a girdle of leafy Oaks and Chesnut Trees and whose round Summit was striped with variety of greens, rising immediately above, allured our attention. The peasant who guided us, advancing before with his Ladder under his arm, pointed to a Blue winding River covering its shallow rocky channel with a rapid succession of light sparkling waves and that followed the serpentine windings of the narrow Valley, and was lost in the Lake whose azure gloom blending with the haze of the distant shore terminated on one side our prospects with an aerial indistinctness.

Do you perceive that greyish cliff, said the peasant, still directing our eyes to the edge of the Stream. Up that Precipice, abrupt as it is, we must climb if you are still desirous of reaching the grotto. Three branching Elders, continued he, must serve you then for Conductor, my assistance can extend no further than holding the ladder below. Heavens, answered I, you do not mean we should clambour up that pointed Rock that stands detached like a Tower, and from which project yon phantastic group of shattered trees, those, I flatter myself, are not the Conductors you propose us. No, No, replied the sturdy clown, I believe very few of you

Gentlemen mountain Climbers are equal to such an Enterprise. For my part I have often been let down that very Peak which alarms you so, and have robbed many an Eagle's nest in time with all possible composure. Well, Well, said I, no eyrie is now in question, so pray lead the way down the steeps. I long to be in the Valley, to tread those green spots by the stream, to lean a moment against the Chesnut Trees which spring from them, and from there look up to the Cliffs and down to the Lake and all around in short. Our Conversation was now obliged to relax a little as the difficulty of the descent summoned all our Attention. Had I not been long inured to such expeditions, had I not ascended the peaks above the Grande Chartreuse, clamboured about Mount Glemmis, and stumbled over the Glaciers, I should certainly have rolled speedily into the Valley, and risked a Voyage to Fairyland, rather a little too soon ; but as it was I arrived safe at the bottom, and as I am not so ceremonious as some Folks are in the operation who make a thousand Compliments to themselves about catching Cold and tell as many stories about not sweating half as much as they ought to do, I fairly laid myself down on the sloping green sward under the shade of one of those leafy Chesnuts which I had marked from above and slept as serenely as if under a silken pavilion. How long I slept neither I know nor you care, I suppose, but as you are an odd sort of a personage you would have enjoyed awakening like me and not knowing where you were, being prodigiously surprized to find yourself amidst shelving steeps, hanging woods, and nodding promontories on the margin of a Stream that you scarce knew by sight and in Company with a group of Goats with whom you were totally unacquainted. For my part the first moment I opened my eyes I entirely forgot where I was, or for why I was dozing in this retired Valley. I had been dreaming of past events, and prognosticating future, the present were the last which presented themselves. However, after an instant, reflection recalled I was journeying to the grotto of the Fairies, whether to consult them or to collect portions of stalactite, I knew not directly ; so willing to be informed I turned towards my guide and, looking more at an opening in the cliffs above

where I expect the grotto was situated rather than at him, demanded in a very silly stare I believe, where are the Fairies—changed into Bats long ago, and pray why—a good riddance I promise you, quoth the Clown, these were the most mischievous set of Beings in the Universe, not a Baby could remain in its cradle, nor a Chesnut in its Bark, nor a head on its shoulders, nor a Curé in his pulpit, these were the most officious, the most meddling elves that ever haunted a village. Now who was so kind as to change them to a bat's carcase? *Le Bon Dieu*, because, *Because*, every now and then they had the trick of holding their Sabbath under the Church and tempting the Monks and pinching the Nuns—he would have run on much longer but I stopped him by setting my feet on the trunk of a Chesnut bended perhaps by a series of ages, and laying hold of an Oak branch that dangled over it sprang upon the shelving steeps of sand, and fragments overgrown by a thick vegetation, and, after a quarter of an hour's clambouring amongst them, reached a ledge of mossy Rock that bulged a little forwards, and seating myself upon it, waited patiently and with my eyes fixed on the cool green valley, till my Guide had discovered a convenient place to fix the Ladder—which very convenient act being performed, I began ascending and hung for a second or two between the craggs above and the Woods and the Valley below. Had I dropped I should have fallen plump into the clear winding Rivulet whose appearance now for the first time began to alarm me. I was not a little rejoiced when I found myself once more on a firm mass of the Mountain, full before a darkish Fissure, the entrance of the grotto and the portal of my expectations, but this pleasure was rather damped by the ideas of another aerial expedition and another adventure on the River below. It was now between 10 and 11, the Sun was beginning to shine forth with all its splendour, and the white cliffs were growing almost too resplendent for the Eye which eagerly turned towards the tufted foliage of the Grove and afterwards as it were resuming courage ventured to gaze at the glowing purple haze of the distant peaks that determined on every side the horizon.

The winding light of the River contrasted with the

dark green of its margin, and the dashing occasioned by some Herds which were passing over, were circumstances which enhanced the charms of the prospect and tempted me to pass divine minutes in contemplating it, tho' at the very mouth of the haunted Cavern I had been so long desirous of exploring.

CHAPTER IV

"BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF EXTRAORDINARY PAINTERS" (1778-1780)

Beckford returns to Fonthill : His impressions : Sent on a Tour through England : Plymouth : He and Lettice arrested as spies : Visits Lord Courtenay, and Charles Hamilton : A taste for horticulture : Goes north : Returns to Fonthill : Writes "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" : Correspondence with Lettice concerning the book : Lettice's preface to the "Memoirs" : Motives that inspired the "Memoirs" : Beckford's sense of fun : "A laughable book" : Lockhart's verdict on the "Memoirs" : The account of the Extraordinary Painter "Sucrewasser of Vienna" : Letters, December 3, 1779, to May 10, 1780 : Beckford at Court

It was a matter of course that Beckford should make the Grand Tour, but before he embarked upon more extensive travels, it was thought advisable that he should return home for a while. It is generally supposed that, after an absence of a year and a half, he was summoned to England by his mother, who thought it desirable for him to see something of his own country ; but it is more than probable that his recall may have been due to suggestions made privately to Mrs. Beckford by Lettice or Colonel Hamilton, who may have been unwilling to be solely responsible for a lad so unlike his fellows. Beckford was, indeed, difficult to understand. He had no boyish faults apparently, beyond a latent disposition to mischief, which soon showed itself in the composition of the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" ; he cared not at all for games or sport, he rarely sought companions of his own age, and, though contented with the society of clever, well-read men and happy with a book, his great delight

was in solitude to commune with Nature or to indulge his fanciful and sometimes morbid musings. These latter pleasures, indeed, he was not willing to abandon, and soon after he arrived at Fonthill, he again poured out his soul in a rhapsody of composition.

FONTHILL, *December 4th*, 1778.

being the full of the Moon.

The Dusk approaches. I am musing on the Plain before the House which my Father reared. No cheerful illuminations appear in the Windows, no sounds of Musick issue from the Porticos, no gay Revellers rove carelessly along the Colonades; but all is dark, silent and abandoned. Such Circumstances suit the present tone of my mind. Did I behold a number of brilliant Equipages rattling across the Lawn, or hear the confused buzz of animated Conversation, or were a peal of Laughter to reach my Ears or were they assaulted by shouts of hilarity and Joy, should I not fly to the woods for consolation and bury myself in their gloom to enjoy solitude in security? You are the *human Being* to whom I have discovered the strangeness of my fancies; for you can feel as well as myself, the melancholy pleasures of wandering alone in the Dusk over Plains of green sward, bordered on one side by Hills of Oaks and on the other by a broad River whose opposite Shore presents distant Glens and pastures, wild Copses and Groves of pines to which the Twilight gives an additional Solemnity. I surveyed my native prospects with fraternal affection and looked fondly on every tree as if we had been born in the same hour. The Air I breathed seemed nearer of Kin to me than that I had elsewhere respired; in short the Hills, the Woods, the Shrubs, the very Moss beneath my Feet entered into this general Alliance and I fancied myself surrounded by an assembly of my best Friends and nearest Relations. Of what other Company then could I be ambitious? This was the spot, methought, as I looked on a round of Turf peculiarly green (and so sheltered by Banks and Shrubberies as to produce Violets even in this bleak Month) this was the spot perhaps where my Guardian Genius first spread over my infant Years the wings of protection. That round of Turf, those flowers, sprang from the benign

influence of his approach and I shall ever regard them as memorials of his presence. The airy People who watch over Flowers beheld him descend and, willing to commemorate the Event, have sprinkled the Turf he selected with the purest Dew ; therefore, it is green, therefore perfumed with Violets. An hour glided swiftly away whilst I was lost in these agreeable dreams, the Moon began to brighten at the approach of Night and the Evening Star beamed brilliantly above a lonely Chapel where many repose in Death. I listened to every wild Note that trembled in the Winds, and whilst I was leaning against an Oak, a faint murmur from afar off stole upon my ear. Soon I distinguished a flight of Rooks rising like Motes on the Horizon. In an instant they spread over the Sky and poising themselves above the River were joined by another host shooting rapidly from the West. Now enlarging their Circles and taking a bolder sweep, the whole Heaven was in motion with innumerable wings. The rush of their flight and the continual *cawing* with which they filled the Air interested me beyond conception. How earnestly did I wish for the Talisman of Lockhart that I might address myself to these winged Legions and ask them from whence they came. Over what woods have ye flown ? I should say. Tell me what Scenes ye have surveyed ? Communicate to me your joy at returning every night to those Cities in the Groves formed amongst innumerable Boughs where ye employ so well your ingenuity. Did I behold them with your eyes, each branch would seem the Pillar of a Palace and every crooked twig a stately Ornament. Tell me if the tufts of Moss on Yonder grotesque Oak stumps are not boasted by your Nobles as hangings of *goodlie* Arras, and those hollow Cavities beneath in the tree, are they not regarded by your Poets as awful Caverns where many adventures have happened to Rooks of yore. Perhaps ye have also your superstitious Fears and when warmly established in your nests relate what Spectres have haunted the Beech-roots so far below and croak forth the prophecies your ancestors heard issuing from bowers of Ivy ; for are not these green festoons that flourish in spite of Winter your consecrated Bowers ? Confess to me if strange Rites are not often performed in them which heretical squirrels disturb and despise. Ah, would I were acquainted with

that mysterious Word, by pronouncing of which ancient Brachmans transported their Souls into the Bodies of other Animals. Then would I rise with ye into the air and share the charms and the perils of your Enterprizes. Then should I experience the pleasure of floating amongst Clouds and the triumph of looking down on the World beneath. I should glory in directing the flight of thousands, above precipices and rivers to Wilds where the ripest berries glow on the Sprays; and how great would be my exultations, when I found myself returning in a still Evening like this with innumerable friends all cheerfully conversing together, all smoothly waving our Wings and vying with each other in the ease and rapidity of our motions. And when all my Companions are sunk into repose, may I be that Rook, destined to watch over the ground, who sails alone thro' the skies by Moonlight and dares view those Owls, the Sorcerers of the feathered kind, whose shriek is alone sufficient to scare the bravest that lift the Wing. I had scarce ended my soliloquy before the Sky was almost intirely deserted. Here and there indeed some solitary Rooks, who for reasons unknown to me had deserted the throng, hastened once more with faint cawings to rejoin them and before I can write this are all hushed amongst the Oaks in profound tranquility. Soon after I left my tree and directed my steps homewards. The Bats flit frequently before me and many an Owl, according to the mythology of Birds, quitted his haunt and hastened to perform incantations.

I then ascended the steps which lead to a vast hall paved with Marble and seating myself, like the Orientals, on Cushions of Brocade placed by a blazing fire was served with Tea and a species of white bread which has crossed the *Atlantic*. Meanwhile my thoughts were wandering into the interior of Africa and dwelt for hours on those Countries I love. Strange tales of Mount Atlas and relations of Travellers amused my fancy. One instant I imagined myself viewing the marble palaces of Ethiopian princes seated on the green woody margin of Lakes, studded in sands and wildernesses, the next transported me to the Rocks of *Carena* where Atlantes strove vainly to preserve Rugiero from the Perils of War. Some few minutes after, I found myself standing before a thick wood

listening to impetuous water falls and screened from the Ardour of the Sun by its foliage. I was wondering at the Scene when a tall comely Negro wound along the slopes of the Hills and without moving his lips made me comprehend I was in Africa, on the brink of the *Nile* beneath the Mountains of *Amara*. I followed his steps thro' an infinity of irregular Vales, all skirted with Rocks and blooming with an aromatic vegetation, till we arrived at the hollowed Peak and after exploring a Labyrinth of paths, which led to its summit, a wide Cavern appeared before us. Here I surveyed landscapes of the most romantic Cast, tasted such fruits and scented such perfumes as ravished my senses. I was all Delight and amazement. We entered the Cavern and fell prostrate before the sacred source of the *Nile* which issues silently from a deep Gulph in the Rock. Suddenly the spirit of Father *Ureta* rose like a mist from the Chasm and seizing me with its influence, discovered the interior of the Cave, ascended thro' the Mountain, and brought me swiftly to a Castle with many towers of grotesque Architecture. There I saw huge treasures and crowds of unknown Mortals walking in vaulted Halls whose stately arches impressed veneration. Here was deposited ancient records and Histories of which the rest of Men are ignorant, poems sung by the Choirs of Paradise, and volumes, which contain the sage Councils of Abraham delivered by that Patriarch in the plains of *Mamre*. Busy multitudes were continually shifting from Place to Place; but before I could notice their Occupations, the Spirit snatched me away with such inconceivable rapidity that I knew not how I was conveyed to a small Lawn circled by Rocks and falling streams mingled with Woods and hanging Meadows where Leopards and Antelopes browsed fearless together, and birds justly denominated of Paradise fluttered round the flowers, whilst the Phoenix such as Poets describe soared into the blue Æther and glistened in every beam. A bright sun shining full on the glowing Colours of the Scene o'erpowerd my sight and obliged me to seek the Woods whose Shade and Fragrance delighted me beyond conception; but I was not long suffered to enjoy them. Some irresistible Impulse drove me to the extremity of the Lawn, where I recoiled with Horror and Amazement at the sight of a Precipice whose Basis seemed to rest on the

surface of our Globe. A faint blueish Mist veiled the Seas and Continents and it was in vain that I strove to distinguish the Mountains from the Plains, or the Lakes from the Valleys. The Spirit skimmed by me once more like a transitory breeze, and after hovering for some moments round the nearest pinnacle of Rocks stood calmly at my side. Thou art gazing, whispered a thin airy voice, at the Fortunate Mountain of Paradise. Those Groves, those woody Vales afforded a retreat to the first of Men. That very herbage was the bed on which he reposed. The stately birds that move around us once held familiar converse with him and still mourn the moment when fiery seraphim drove him trembling down yonder declivities, no more to taste these clear fountains or sleep in his native Bowers, the Regions of perpetual Spring, where all the dreams of inspired Bards are realized. I would tell thee more, but mark how the World below fades gradually on the sight, the Seas and Rivers begin to glimmer thro' the Dusk and catch a faint beam of the rising Moon. The moment is drawing near when thy stay is unlawful and prophane. This bright light will soon yield to a silver Dawn and during the consecrated hours the spirits of holy prophets descend and converse of Men. I was once a mortal ; my affections still hover round the Globe and it is with impatience I wait the period when we are permitted to discourse on earthly subjects. That period will soon arrive ; for hark, the Angels who are directing our planet are beginning their nightly hymn. Behold how the Clouds fleet that waft them above the Poles. Listen ! their Carol is echoed by the Mountains, it sounds amongst the spheres. Hark, it is answered by the Guardians of the Moon, faint, very faint, is their melody, how it dies away amongst distant Worlds !

The spirit ceased. My Soul was thrilled with the celestial Choirs. A fresh wind waved all the Trees and ruffled the herbage and in an instant Myriads of lovely forms glanced amongst the woods. I heard the Voices of departed Friends and tried to spring towards the Meads whence the sounds proceeded ; but the Breezes that swept along the Lawn were far too pure for my mortal frame. I trembled, my heart beat, my Arteries throbbed, in vain I attempted to join the beckoning shades, some dreadful pressure chained me to the ground, in vain I called to

those I loved, my lamentations and loud Cries were lost in the gales. How many times did I stretch forth my Arms and attempt advancing—all my endeavours were fruitless, and, unable to struggle more, I sunk beneath my sorrow and beating my breast, exclaimed—Ah, would that I might die! At length I found myself released, and with a violent effort ran or rather flew upon the Lawn; but as I advanced the Forms retreated, a confused murmur of Rills of Voices and of Instruments fled before me, the Rocks, the Woods, the whole prospect seemed in motion, and as it floated away I followed, till, impelled by the swiftness of my steps, I shot headlong from the edge of the Mountain and kept falling, continually falling, till lost in immensity. The Horror and amazement of my Descent dissolved the Dream. I started up, stared wildly around, and, when Sense and Recollection returned, found myself extended in the same Hall, by the same Pillars as before, the Fire expiring and its embers just glooming thro' the shade.

Such are my phantastic visions and such the flights of my fancy when Reason has abandoned it. The vast excursions it had made, the variety and rapid succession of Images and all the agitation of my slumbers, fatigued instead of refreshed me, and, desirous of more sound repose, I stole silently to Bed. The Storms and driving showers soon hushed me to sleep and I dreamt no more. Thus you see my Reason or my fancy is continually employed, when abandoned by the one I obey the other. These two powers are my Sun and Moon. The first dispels vapours and clears up the face of things, the other throws over all Nature a dim Haze and may be styled the Dream of Delusions. I should be too happy could I remain all Winter under the dominion of these Sovereigns, lapt in the silence and solitude they both so peculiarly esteem; but I must return again to London, again be teized with Visits and dull impertinent Society, again suffer the encroachments of Fashion and crouch beneath the influence of solemn Idleness and approved Dissipation. But no, this is too terrifying a prospect. I will break my shackles however splendid and maintain my Allegiance. I will seclude myself if possible from the World, in the midst of the Empire, and converse many hours every day with you, Mesron and Nouronihar. I am determined to

enjoy my Dreams my phantasies and all my singularity, however irksome and discordant to the Worldlings around. In spite of them I will be happy, will employ myself in trifles, according to their estimation; and, instead of making myself master of the present political state of America, instead of forming wise plans for its future subjection or calculating when Spain will follow her Neighbor's example, I will read, talk and dream of the *Incas*, of their gentle empire, the solemn worship of the Sun, the charms of *Quito* and the majesty of the *Andes*. The appearance of *Ontario* and *Niagara*, when first discovered, the Customs of *Virginia*, its lovely *savannahs*, its Idol *Kiwasa*, the Tombs of its Monarchs shall engage my Attention. It shall dwell also on *Florida* and the Temple of the *Tolomeco*; but it shall never be turned towards a Philadelphian Meeting house. It shall sometimes be occupied with the expeditions of *Columbus*, *Cabral*, and *Soto*, but never with those of *General Gage*. I scarce ever reflect at present on the state of Affairs either in England or America. If I did, what should I encounter but disgust and Indignation? Let me not conclude with these disagreeable words, let me rather finish by expressing my Peace and Contentment here, my tranquil occupations and undisturbed reveries, my ardent wishes and desires of Futurity. Farewell, Would that you could disengage yourself from the little Bustles and paltry concerns of this poor world like

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Probably it was with the object of counteracting his dreaminess, and of making a man of the world of him, that Beckford was sent in the summer of 1779 on a tour through England. From Fonthill he and Lettice went to Plymouth, then threatened by the fleets of France and Spain, which were, indeed, visible on the horizon, while Sir Charles Hardy and the vessels under his command hugged the shore, waiting for reinforcements to enable them to cope with the enemies' superior force. Plymouth was in a state of alarm and suspicion, and Lettice, chancing to make a note, was seized as a spy, and, with his pupil, conducted to the guard-house—only, of course, to be released with apologies when the mistake was

discovered. Beckford paid a visit to his relative, Lord Courtenay, at Powderham Castle, near Exeter; and then went to stay with Charles Hamilton, Member of Parliament for Truro, who lived at Pain's Hill, near Weybridge. Charles Hamilton was an enthusiastic gardener, and his estate, we are told, was famous for the magnificence of its arboreal beauties; it may be that here Beckford first imbibed the taste for horticulture that later caused him to design the wonderful gardens at Fonthill. To trace the journeys in detail would be tedious, for, unfortunately, Beckford kept no record of his impressions; from Pain's Hill he went to Gloucester, Worcester, and Birmingham; he visited Chatsworth and Haddon Hall; Manchester, Liverpool, and the Lakes; and showed particular interest at Lancaster in the castle of John of Gaunt, whom he claimed as an ancestor.

In November (1779) he returned to Fonthill, and partly there, and partly at his mother's house in London, wrote his first book, the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters." It is well in keeping with the curious contradictions of Beckford's character, that, while his letters before and after, and even while he was engaged upon the "Memoirs," were so full of dreams, that work should be a burlesque. Hitherto there has been some doubt when the "Memoirs" were written, but the question is set at rest by the following hitherto unpublished letters written by Lettice, when he was seeing the little volume through the press.

THE REV. JOHN LETTICE *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

SID. COLL.

Decr. 12th, 1779.

MY DEAR SIR,

Last Wednesday I received your charming Packet by the Post, which, tho' it was worth everything I would pay for it, might have been sent very conveniently in a

couple of Trunks. It came most opportunely to cheer my Spirits in the hour of Disappointment. The only one of our College Livings, which was worth my wishing for (most of them being pitiful things) is lately fallen, and that but a short time before my Senior would not improbably have been otherwise provided for. As the case stands, however, he must have it. After having waited for Preferment from the Society till many of my Contemporaries have sent their Sons to College, I should not have desir'd much longer Exercise of my Patience. All the Reflection I have to make upon the Matter is, that I ought to possess that virtue in wonderful Perfection. To go to a more agreeable Subject, Mr. Hunter (who by the by is a very superior critic) and I have read together *Aldrovandus* and *Og of Basan* with great Delight. I think they please me better than ever, especially the latter, and my friend is not a whit behind me in admiration of them. I shall to-day shew them to several others of my Friends. The Master was unfortunately gone out of College before they came and will not return soon enough to read them, which mortifies me much ; as I am sure he would have done it with particular pleasure. Hunter and I have this moment been reading the two last *Lives*. We agree that [*illegible*] chosen name has many charming strokes of humour in it and that *Blunderbussiana* is the *Chef d'œuvre* of the whole. I wish you would write two more *Lives* and if they are as well done as these I should have no objection to Midwifing them to the World in the Spring, if you have no one, as I do believe they would be extremely well received. We will talk more about it when I get to Fonthill. In the meantime I will take care to give them such corrections as they may want.

I have made such particular enquiries by Letter relative to Election interests at Bedford, and have received such full information that I do not find any necessity for going there. I sometime ago sent my intelligence to Mr. Wildman, who perhaps may have communicated it to you before this time. I shall only tell you now in a word that nothing can be done there without a Contest, which Mr. W. does not think it worth your while to engage in. Had things, however, been more promising all your Schemes might be disarranged

by a Dissolution of Parliament, which some people seem to think may still take place.

I have employed myself a great deal since my Residence. I have abridged almost every Paragraph of Hume's Dialogues, that I might do him no injustice in the Examination I meant to give them. I have since composed three discourses, two of them against the Principles of this Book. One I have already preach'd before the University and am much encouraged to wish for an Opportunity of preaching the second by the Reception which was given the first. I am advised to publish them, and perhaps shall think of it. It can never be amiss to give my Friends an Opportunity of saying that I have written in Defence of Religion.—I have many Compliments for you here, and I beg you to present mine to Mrs. Beckford and the Ladies whom I have the honour to know at Fonthill. Blomberg would be very happy to wait upon you, but fears it will be impossible. I have not seen Mr. Phipps since yours. I propose leaving Cambridge about the 20th, and being at Fonthill the 28th.

I am, dear Sir,

Most affectly. yours,

J. LETTICE.

THE REV. JOHN LETTICE *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

Many thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your two last letters. The former of them brought charming entertainment. The Rookery part of that letter gives me new delight whenever I read it. I have shewn it yet but to one of my friends (the most critical among them) and he admires it highly. I mean to show it but to one or two more, for as I think the beauties of no common sort, I do not imagine common readers entirely competent to [judge] them. I have shewn Watersouchy to nobody; because it might make the publication of the lives less a secret than we wish it to be. I like it perfectly well, now I see it written out fair, and do not think it any way unworthy to appear among the rest. It was unlucky that Hemmelinck did not come rightly spelt in your manuscript, as the printer has not sufficient types of the sort we use to let his press stand more than a couple of days; so we were

obliged to let it stand *Hemmeline*. It will not however signify much, if we correct it in the errata, which I will take care to do. The printer promised faithfully to finish by the 10th April, so that I doubt not having the pleasure of meeting you in town on that day or the next.

I beg complts. to the ladies and remain, Dear Sir,
most affectly. your much obliged &c. &c.,

SID. COLL., *Mar.* 23 [1780].

J. LETTICE.

Lettice, who enjoyed a well-earned holiday while his pupil was with Mrs. Beckford, was evidently much pleased with the juvenile effort, and took very seriously his task of correcting the proofs and such other duties in connection with the book as fell to his lot. He it was, too, who wrote the "Advertisement that supplied the place of a preface," and in these lines may be read the pride he had in the lad whose education he had directed.

The editor of the following pieces is in possession of some particulars relative to the author, which, he has reason to think, might interest the curiosity of a respectable class of readers, and even prepossess them in favour of the publication. As, however, an impartial judgment on its merits is wished for, and the editor's availing himself of such an advantage might suggest the idea of attempting to bias the public opinion, no communication of the sort is allowed. Permission could not be obtained to mention even the particular age at which the author wrote these pieces. It was in vain the editor's partiality for them induced him to express something more than hope, that their merits with the public might rest little on that circumstance. For he has ever been persuaded, that the success of the most admired productions of the *ingenium precox*, at least in our own language, has been much more owing to their intrinsic worth, than to the period of life at which they were written. His principal motive, therefore, could he have imparted the particular last alluded to, had been only to contribute one fact more towards the science of human nature. The author's delicacy, however, was not to be overcome, and to that must

be attributed the air of mystery, which, it is feared, may discover itself in introducing this publication to the world.

Whatever merit the plan of the following work may be thought to want in some respects, it is at least presumed to be new; and perhaps a better could not have been found for the display of a picturesque imagination. It was the design of the writer to exhibit striking objects both of nature and art, together with some sketches of human life and manners, through a more original medium than those usually adopted in the walk of novel-writing and romance. How far the attempt has succeeded is now left to the candid decision of the public.

THE EDITOR.

"I will explain the origin of the 'Memoirs,'" Beckford said to Cyrus Redding in 1835, fifty-five years after its publication. "The housekeeper at old Fonthill, as is customary, used to get her fee by exhibiting the pictures to those who came to see the building. Once or twice I heard her give the most extraordinary names to different artists. I wondered how such nonsense could enter the brain of woman. More than this, in her conceit she would at times expatiate upon excellencies of which the picture before her had no trace. The temptation was irresistible in my humour. I was but seventeen. My pen was quickly in hand composing the 'Memoirs.' In future the housekeeper had a printed guide in aid of her descriptions. She caught up my phrases; the fictitious names of the wives, too, whom I had given to my imaginary painters, were soon learned in addition; her descriptions became more picturesque, her language more graphic than ever, to the sight-seeing people. Mine was the textbook, whoever exhibited the paintings. The book was soon on the tongues of all the domestics. Many were the quotations current upon the merits of Og of Basan and Watersouchy of Amsterdam. Before a picture of Rubens or Murillo there was often a charming dissertation upon the pencil of Herr Sucrewasser of Vienna, or that great artist Blunderbussiana of Venice. I used to

listen unobserved until I was ready to kill myself with laughing, at the authorities quoted to the squires and farmers of Wiltshire, who took all for gospel. It was the most ridiculous thing in effect you can conceive. Between sixty and seventy years ago people did not know as much of the fine arts as they do now. Not but that they have still much to learn."

The biographies of Aldrovandus Magnus of Bruges, of Andrew Guelph and Og of Basan, disciples of the former, of Sucrewasser of Vienna, Blunderbussiana of Dalmatia, and Watersouchy of Amsterdam make up, as the author said in his last years, "a laughable book," but, indeed, it is more than that, for it contains much brilliant satire on the Dutch and Flemish schools, showing that the writer, although so young, had profited by his early training in art. "(It is) a performance," Lockhart wrote in 1834, "in which the buoyancy of juvenile spirits sees of the results of already extensive observation, and the judgments of a refined (though far too fastidious and exclusive) taste." The "Memoirs" were published anonymously in 1780, but as they have not been republished since 1834, and are probably unknown to the majority of readers, it is perhaps legitimate to reprint the briefest of the biographies.

Our readers must now be presented with scenes and occurrences widely differing from those which last we placed before them. They will no longer behold an artist, consumed by the fervour of his genius and bewildered by the charms of his imagination; but the most prudent and sage amongst them will admire the regular and consistent conduct of Sucrewasser, which forms a striking contrast to the eccentricity of Og.

The family of the Sucrewassers had long been established at Vienna; they had kept a grocer's shop, which descended from father to son thro' a course of many generations. The father of our artist exercised his hereditary business with the same probity as his ancestors. His mother, the daughter of a Lombard pawnbroker, was the best sort of woman in the world, and had no other fault

than loving wine and two or three men besides her husband. Young Sucrewasser was invested, at the age of six years, with the family apron, and after having performed errands for some time, was admitted to the desk at twelve ; but discovering a much greater inclination for designing the passengers, which were walking to and fro before the window where he was doomed to sit, than noting the articles of his father's commerce in his book, he was bound apprentice to an uncle of his mother, who painted heraldry for the Imperial Court, and his brother was promoted to the desk in his room. Sucrewasser took great delight in his new situation, and learnt, with success, to bestow due strength on a lion's paw, and give a courtly flourish to a dragon's tail. His eagles began to be remarked for the justness of their proportions and for the neatness of their plumage ; in short, an Italian painter, by name Insignificanti, remarked the delicacy of his pencil, and was resolved to obtain him for his scholar. The youth, finding himself in a comfortable habitation with a kind uncle, who was in a thriving way, and who offered him a share in his business when the time of his apprenticeship should expire, expressed no great desire to place himself under the tuition of Insignificanti ; but as that painter had acquired a very splendid reputation, and was esteemed exceedingly rich, his parents commanded him to accept the offer, and Sucrewasser never disobeyed. He remained two or three years with this master, which he employed in faithfully copying his works ; generally small landscapes, with shepherds and shepherdesses feeding their flocks, or piping under Arcadian shades. These pieces pleased the world in general and sold well, which was all Insignificanti desired, and Sucrewasser had no other ambition than that of his master. The greatest harmony subsisted between them till three years were expired.

About this time the Princess Dolgoruki, then at the Court of Vienna, selected Insignificanti and his pupil to paint her favourite lap-dog, whose pendent ears and beautifully curling tail seemed to call loudly for a portrait. Insignificanti, before he began the picture, asked his pupil, with all the mildness of condescension, Whether he did not approve his intention of placing the dog on a red velvet cushion. Sucrewasser replied gently, that he presumed a blue one would produce a much finer effect.

His master, surprized to find this difference of opinion, elevated his voice, and exclaimed, "Aye, but I propose adding a gold fringe, which shall display all the perfection of my art ; all the feeling delicacy of my pencil ; but, hark you ! I desire you will abstain from spoiling this part of the picture with your gross touch, and never maintain again that blue will admit of half the splendor of red." These last words were pronounced with such energy, that Sucrewasser laid down his pencil, and begged leave to quit his master ; who soon consented, as he feared Sucrewasser would surpass him in a very short space of time. The young man was but coolly received by his parents, who chided him for abandoning his master ; but when they perceived his performances sold as well as before this rupture, their anger ceased, and they permitted him to travel to Venice, after having bestowed on him their benediction with the greatest cordiality.

His route lay through some very romantic country, which he never deigned to regard, modestly conjecturing he was not yet worthy to copy nature ; so without straying either to the right or to the left, he arrived at Venice in perfect health, and recommended himself first to the public by painting in fresco on the walls of some casinos. The subjects were either the four Seasons or the three Graces. Now and then a few blind Cupids, and sometimes a lean Fury, by way of variety. The colouring was gay and tender, and the drawing correct. The faces were pretty uniform and had all the most delightful smirk imaginable ; even his Furies looked as if they were half inclined to throw their torches into the water, and the serpents around their temples were as mild as eels. Many ladies stiled him *Pittore amabile*, and many gentlemen had their snuff-boxes painted by his hand. He lived happily and contentedly till he became acquainted with Soorcrout, who was a great admirer of Titian, and advised him by all means to copy his performances ; and as he generally followed the advice of those who thought it worth their while to give him any, he immediately set about it, but did not profit so much as he expected. It was Soorcrout who engaged him in that unlucky dispute with Og of Basan and Andrew Guelph ; a controversy which lowered them considerably in the eyes of the world, and forfeited them the protection of Signor Boccadolce.

After this disgrace, Soorcrout went to England, and Sucrewasser loitered in the environs of Venice till the storm was blown over. He then returned, lived peaceably there many years, and died at length of a cold he caught at a party on the water. His most splendid performance, Salome, mother of the Maccabees, which he imitated from Titian, was sold by Soorcrout in England.

Here may be inserted another series of letters, showing the same traits that distinguished those written at Geneva, and from them may be constructed a picture of the lad, now twenty years of age, moody, dreamy, indulging a vivid imagination, yet saved from morbidness by the keen sense of the ridiculous that inspired the "Memoirs."

FONTHILL, *Friday* 8. o'clock Eve.
Decr. 3rd, 1779.

The Winds are whispering to me the strangest things in the Universe and my ear is filled with aerial Conversations. What a multitude of Voices are borne on that blast from afar! . . . I walk to and fro in my Cell and fancy myself in the Caverns of *Chehabeddin* where every volume contained a Spirit. I lay my Ear close to them, listen and seem harkening to significant murmurs. The Soul of Plato talks to me from the Leaves, Homer gives responses—I am awed, I tremble—and wait their Dictates in respectful silence.

The Fires and Lamps burn around in Stillness, and it is this sacred Calm which invites departed Sages to my Cell. No one enters this Apartment, its Solitude is now unviolated. I alone am conscious what Treasures of Literature are deposited on every side and what exquisite productions of Art lie hid in its recesses. Here I pass whole hours in pleasing Dreams and employ my Majic Solely to raise Illusions.

Innumerable Phantoms continually hover around me and the most splendid scenes instantaneously appear at my Command. Your sunset is the Talisman which transports me to Hesperia and under the auspices of your pencil I ascend Mount Atlas and watch the last blushes of Day from its exalted Summit. I have lately committed myself to the guidance of Voyagers and followed them

over vast Oceans to distant Climates where my exotic Inclinations are satisfied ; but what would be my joy were you to accompany me. Must I give up all Hope of seeing you this Winter in the Hall of the Pyramid ? Must I renounce this inexpressible satisfaction ? I cannot—I will not—Think how we should exult at finding ourselves in arched Chambers glowing with yellow light—amidst Vases formed in another Hemisphere—and Caba-listic Mirrors wherein Futurity is unveiled.

Let me intreat you not to refuse my Solicitations but come (if only for a Day) and let us converse once more together in the Peaceful Palace—in the interior Cell, where none but Holy Spirits can hear our Discourse. There in that still retreat—let me tell you all I feel—let me confess to you the sorrows that prey upon my mind and own how hopeless, how dejected I am—You can pity me—you have felt the misery of being separated from all one loves—you can share my afflictions when I disclose my disappointment and when I say—It is in vain these Vases are ranged in the loveliest Order—and filled with the perfume of Roses—in vain this whole Apartment is spread with the richest Carpets and glows with the softest Light—those Eyes are not destined to survey it on which I could gaze for ever.

Adieu—remember me and write immediately. A Letter from you will be my greatest Consolation. I desire this Letter may be *sacred* and be neither read to or be seen by anyone. There is a Book called the Sorrows of Werter ; read it and tell me if every Line is not resplendent with Genius.

Dec. 18, 1779.

Fonthill is at present in all the Majesty of Mud, Lap Dogs, and Bridgemans in every corner.—Miss Ellis in the midst equally dispensing her favors and dealing about ready made Wit and facetiousness in profusion at a very easy rate. . . . G. S. is just arrived and I am almost out of my senses.—There is such a confusion and such a tattling.—O Lord, what would I give to be in that New Jerusalem where blessed Spirits glide slipshod about without making the least disturbance—How often when angered by stupidity in every shape, have I wished for the little C., that child, who, I can assure you, has five times the sense,

taste, and discernment of the whole circle put together in which I am at present fated to move. But one must look forward to better times, as a neighbour of ours observeth.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS *

FONTHILL, 9 at Night, *Decr. 24th*,
1779.

Since the receipt of your last Letter I have not looked upon the Egyptian Hall with the same pleasure as before or enjoyed the glow of the Central Fire. What are the Indian Apartments to me, now I am assured you cannot view them? You would pity me, could some Spirit transport you to this solitary Chamber where I lie stretched on the Carpets—pining.

The animated trivets and footstools that amble around me put me out of all patience. Last Night, tired with their impertinence I stole from the Saloon and led by a glimpse of moonshine between the Arches of the Egyptian Hall, went out at the southern portal. The dissolution of the snows next the pavement had left round it a circle of verdure, beyond which all was whiteness and grey mist that, rising from the waters and spreading over the Lawn, seemed to enclose the peaceful Palace on every side. Thro' the medium of these Vapours the moon cast a dim blueish light just sufficient to discover the surrounding Woods changed into groves of Coral. I was so charmed with the novelty of the prospect that setting the cold at defiance, I walked to and fro on the platform for several minutes, fancying the fictions of romance realised, and almost imagining myself surrounded by some wondrous misty barrier no *prophane* could penetrate. How I wished for my dear Wm. to share with me this imaginary but delightful confinement.

FONTHILL, *Decr. 29th*, 1779.

My cares have been a little while suspended—for I have been listening these several Evenings to plaintive Sicilian Airs. You can hardly believe what a melancholy

* Alexander Cozens (*d.* 1786), landscape painter in water-colours, the father of John Robert Cozens (1752–1799).

has of late possessed me. My ideas of Happiness are at length very simple, for they consist alone in a secure retirement with the one I love. I have not spirits to write ten Lines—My only consolation is to hear Louisa and her Sister sing. Never could I have believed myself so entirely subdued—by whom you solely are acquainted. I wonder at myself every instant and only wish you was here to be surprized at me—One moment I am for flying into . . . the next . . . my Cheeks glow and I determine to remain immured in my Cell. Is it possible that a few Weeks' absence can have produced such effects—can have rendered me so miserable—Am I not the strangest of Beings?

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

FONTHILL, *Jany.*, 1780.

Every Day have I been waiting impatiently to hear from you, my lovely Louisa, and every Post has brought me some new disappointment. Fonthill is darkly shaded and all its charms overcast since no Letters have arrived from you. It is in your power by writing a Talisman to dissipate the gloom of its Cells, and will you refuse this consolation? I fancy I am not the least altered if you are not—the same genuine melancholy and thorough contempt of the World inspires me to remain in solitude and silence. Visions play around me and at some solemn moments I am cast into prophetic Trances. Lost in Dreams and majic slumbers my Hours glide swiftly away. I have none to awaken me—none to sympathize with my feelings. Those I love are absent. Thus desolate and abandoned I seek refuge in aerial conversations and talk with spirits whose voices are murmuring in the Gales. They are my Counsellors—from them I hear of past and future events—they sing of departed Seers and Heroes and bring me indian Intelligence,—but not one Syllable have they whispered about you—why then are you the only superior Being—who is deaf to me and silent?

By neglecting incantations my Wand has lost its powers. Were I endowed with the skill of Avicenna it should summon Genii to whaft us to Hesperian Countries. There should we discover the only Human Being who is worthy of our discourse—moving amongst the woody Dells and calling us to enter their Shades.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

FONTHILL, *Febry. 6th*, 1780.

I share the same low Spirits which haunt my Friend and sincerely sympathize with his dejection. You have made me quite uneasy and I shall be miserable till I know what affects you so sadly. Your concerns always become my own. How sorry I am not to have the power of transporting myself to you and of attempting at least to dissipate your gloom. That employment alone could cheer me or divert the deep melancholy into which I am plunged. My own sorrows would vanish before yours . . . ; but still I fear I should prove a forlorn Comforter depressed and languid as I am,—nor will you wonder at my being so—when you consider my dreary situation. I have no one to speak to in my own Language—whichever way I turn—none present themselves in whom I can place the least confidence or to whom I can express my sensations.

I look eagerly for the approach of Spring and watch every swelling bud with the most anxious impatience. You know I resolved to remain here the whole winter—alas, when I formed and communicated that resolution—I had the pleasing hopes of passing many Hours with the one who loved me so tenderly—and sometimes you know I flattered myself with the idea of enjoying your company, but when I found this happy prospect vanishing away, I began to pine like those miserable Indians we saw last Winter torn from their native Regions and shivering in the midst of *Franguistan*, cold gloomy Country—certainly we were not meant to inhabit it—we should have been born in some retired region of Mount Atlas where we might have passed our days with a harmless race of Savages happy in their ignorance and fortunate in cloudless Skies and perpetual Sunshine. I have no more Spirits at present for writing than you have—all my consolation is centred in Fingal and the wild musick of the Winds. I sit for Hours listening to the murmurs of Night—the passing breeze and distant Waterfall. 'Tis my Solitude makes me happy, were you here I should cease to complain. I should then revive—Your kindness in writing only those few lines affected me beyond expression. I require no more. To hear you are less dejected will be the most agreeable tidings that can reach my wilderness—forget not

to send them immediately. Your Son, I suppose, is pretty far advanced in finishing the drawings—I am impatient to see them; but I must not name the word Impatience, lest I abandon myself intirely to its influence. How I long to see you to tell you a thousand things I cannot write. Indeed, you are the only Being upon this Planet in whose bosom I can deposite every thought which enters mine.

FONTHILL, March, 1780.

I was traversing a Wood in the Regions of perpetual Spring when a gale shook a little Cloud of blossoms from the branches, so beautiful and fragrant that I collected them and to my surprise found your Letter almost concealed by Rose Leaves. The Genius of some eastern Wind had whafted it along. Immediately I laid myself down beneath a tall Acacia and read its poetic contents with rapture. How pure! How truly oriental! Indeed I believed it dated from *Sanna* or *Hism al mowâhab*, the Castle of Delights. This must be an Arabian Composition, said I within myself, it breathes all the odours of that happy Country and I inhale them, tho' surrounded by perfumes; for you must know I have left Fonthill sometime and have been transported to *Ginnistan*.

One Evening as I took my solitary Ramble over the Hills, sad and pensive, mourning the absence of those I love, the Sunset grew inconceivably splendid—the Caves of the sleepers were illuminated with the liveliest Red I ever beheld and the Country far around partook of the Refulgence. Not long could I contemplate the effect of this sudden Gleam; for the Clouds descending encircled the Spot on which I stood. Judge of my astonishment and whether it decreased when a melodious Voice whispered the words in my Ears, “Consider how fleeting is the breath of Life!—why then must that fleeting breath be wasted in vain Lamentations? Thou art approaching, O Mortal, each Hour to the fatal Boundary—beyond which are Regions whose mysteries it is not lawful to reveal. Till then bathe thy Spirits in delight and follow us to our Meads on the Summit of Amara, where thou may'st sleep undisturbed on the freshest Herbage till Winter is pass'd away.”

Can you suppose I rejected so benign a proffer?—Without hesitation I committed myself to the warm

Vapour that, drawing nearer and nearer, gild the slopes of the Hills and investing me bore me I know not how into the Air. For several minutes I seemed ascending amongst Clouds of ruddy glowing Colours which concealed every other object from my Sight. All was stillness in this aerial journey except when the soft voice I had heard before sung that verse of *Mesihi's* you have known me so frequently admire.

Be gay—too soon the flowers of Spring will fade.

This gentle admonition was repeated to me again and again; but with such infinitely varied cadence and harmonious modulation that I was grieved when it sounded no more. Just as it ceased, the Vapours dissipated, I found myself in the same delicious Landscape to which I was conveyed last Winter in a Dream. Perhaps you recollect the description I sent you of it when awaken'd from my Trance, and in that case another will be tedious. It is sufficient for me to tell you that I pass my time in Slumbers truly fortunate, since during their influence I forget that cruel separation which so lately filled my Eyes with Tears. None interrupt my repose, no other noise is audible in this calm retreat but the lapse of distant Rills trickling down its craggy promontories. Sometimes methinks I can distinguish the voices of those invisible Beings who brought me hither amongst the whispers of the Groves; but of this I am not quite certain, so faint is their melody. Everything in my present Visionary state is undecided, nor can I properly be said to hear distinctly or behold with clearness. Sounds reach me in confused but soothing murmurs and I survey the surrounding objects with Eyes half closed. To Day, however, the charm is somewhat broken, and rising from my verdant Couch I crossed the Lawn which forms the Summit of *Amara*. A Brook gurgling over some shining pebbles invited me to drink by its uncommon clearness. Never did I taste such limpid Waters! The refreshment they gave my whole frame cannot be described. In these moments I was more than Mortal and fancied I had drank at the celestial Fountain. As I was going once more to dip my hand into the stream, I seemed to hear the voice of my invisible Protectors in the impending Grove.

Instantly I ran to the Spot from whence methought these sounds proceeded, but alas, a deep silence again prevailed save when the Wind blew gently one bough against another. At this instant a sudden rustling seiz'd the Leaves, the blossoms fell and amongst them I found your Letter. Were you but fully sensible of the pleasures I received from its perusal you would not so seldom write, and tho' the space which parts us is immense I am sure to receive whatever you send me. Only walk after Sunset in some green Meadow and when the twilight breeze flows freely from the West, stretch out your hand and trust your Letter to its guidance. I would feign relate a thousand circumstances of my present Situation and attempt describing the Scenes upon which I gaze at this moment; but the favourable Wind has already risen and plays with my paper as if impatient to bear it away. Some powerful Being directs and I dare not murmur. Adieu, think often of me; but require no further information. During these waking intervals I miss the lovely [*illegible*] whose presence is my sovereign joy: that thought is attended with many sighs. But soon I shall seek refuge in my grassy Bed, 'tis then the softest Slumbers steal o'er my senses. Even now I feel their approach—O may they never be dispelled till Fate permits my gazing at least a few fond moments on the one I love.

FONTHILL, March 1780.

My situation is sad and solitary. I stray disconsolately on the Rocks by the Caves of the Sleepers scarcely knowing which way to bend my steps. I look around and all is a perfect void. Those Scenes which were wont to amuse me delight no more.

My Imagination roams to other Countries in search of pleasures it no longer finds at Home. This Evening it has been transported to those immense unfrequented Plains of Tartary which are covered with Herbs and Flowers. Amongst these I fancied myself reposing and thought the one I love best in the Universe was gathering Roses by my side. A visionary Sun gleamed faintly over the boundless prospect, no Hill, no Tree appeared. We heard the murmur of a Rill; but could not discover it; for we seemed lost in airy flowers that, waving above our Heads, diffused a delicious perfume. Why can I not communi-

cate to you my sensations when I imagined myself on the very extremity of the World in the secure possession of all I desired? But it is impossible, they are not to be described. Such Delusions as these form my present felicity, without them I should be the most unhappy of mankind and the persecutions of Franguis would be intolerable. But now, when their conversations grow too discordant for my Nature, I fly, fasten all my Doors, secure myself in the interior Cell and, without the assistance of a magic Carpet, am transported wheresoever I list. Had I not this Power I should soon breathe my last;—but Hope, that omnipotent Divinity, smiles upon me and I resolve to live—she beckons and I follow her—she points to you and still moving forwards leads me to the one I adore. The whole perspective brightens as she advances, the Trees regain their foliage, and the Skies their Serenity. See, she flies to the utmost verge of Nature, and, discovering to my astonished sight those cristal Stairs which lead to another world, I soar on her pinions to the Portals of eternal Happiness. The Vales are thrown back by her beneficent hand and [under] her auspices I wander delighted over the vast Regions of Futurity.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

FONTHILL, *March 13th, 1780.*

I am become wild and timid as a stag, long used to roam in the recesses of a forest. I start when a Frangui presents himself, and, plunging into my solitudes, remain silent and fearful, till he is gone out of my sight. The news of the World affects me not half so much as the chirping of a sparrow, or the rustling of withered leaves. What care I, who pass my morning in groves and my evenings in a quiet cell, whether this ship be taken, or t'other escape, provided the rout of Franguis squabble at a distance! Ambition at present lies dormant in my breast and far from envying the triumphs of others, I exult in my happy tho' inglorious leisure. I wish not to eclipse those who retail the faded flowers of parliamentary eloquence. My senate house is a wood of pines, from whence, on a misty evening, I watch the western sky streaked with portentous red, whilst awful whispers amongst the boughs above me, foretell a series of strange events and

melancholly times. The blast plays in my hair as I sit on this lonely eminence and chills my hand while it traces the name I adore. Perhaps I may never see the one who bears it, again!—that cruel possibility dims my eyes with tears, and in the sad moments I droop, like those languid flowers, oppressed with heavy rain, which Virgil describes; unable to implore consolation. You can comprehend this mute and almost unaccountable sorrow; this deep dejection (if it may be allowed the term); . . . you can abandon your self, like me, to its influence.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* A. COURTENAY

FONTHILL, *March 25th*, 1780.

The sky is blue, the verdure revives, the fish glide thro' the transparent waters, larches tremble in the western breezes, the flocks are spread over the hills, I hear the bleatings at a distance and exult like the rest of Nature in the beams of the morning sun.

But vain and transitory is my happiness! it shines one instant and vanishes the next. Just now the whole prospect heightens, and birds flit gayly over glittering waves, dipping their wings in the stream: others more worthily employed sail thro' the æther with materials to form a convenient habitation. But, look, black clouds roll from the North; blasts rage in the woods of Pan; showers descend, and volleys of hail beat the walls of the Peaceful Palace. The boughs crackle and whole branches are torn from the Oaks on the hill, whilst the rooks, my beloved rooks, fill the grove with clamours, and lament the ruin of their aerial town. I run wild thro' the storm; ascend the steeps and, hurrying to the central lawn where I have vowed to erect a Dome sacred to the mysterious influence of the setting sun, invoke the protection of those woodland Deities we adore; Pan and the good old Sylvanus. "O moderate these tempests and spare my trees. See how the turf is strewed with their once flourishing branches, that so soon would have blossomed to decorate your fanes! Hark, how your winged worshippers complain! and, like me, accuse your inclemency! But let me cease; the pines are no longer agitated, the rustlings subside, and a gleam of sunshine tells me ye are again propitious." Once more delighted, forgetting all my cares, I

rove heedlessly thro' thickets, where the straw-coloured blossoms of the hazel dangle in the sun; and, pursuing a path between shades of laurel, ascend an eminence and gaze at the azure hills afar off towards Cornwall, the western main, beyond which lye stretched out those fortunate Isles, and pleasant Countries,

Where Hesperus and his Daughters three
Sing around the golden tree.

Oh, that we could join the chorus and follow it over Atlas, to those deep solitudes and woody dells, which afford a secure retreat to the happiest of mortals, the Children of the Evening Sun. You are surely one of the number, and so I hope is the little Courtenay.

Saturday, May 1780.

I have been sailing on the Argo since I saw you last. We soon left the Hellespont behind and favourable winds wafted us too swiftly by the green coast of Propontis. Hercules was in raptures at the sight of the lofty Mountain, when his Fates whispered he was to be enshrined a God amongst Gods. We had a great deal of conversation which I shall impart to you this Evening. I long to relate the story of Hylas, who you know accompanied us in the Expedition. . . . I injoin you by all our Divinities of Greece and the Indies not to allow any Engagement whatsoever to hinder your seeing me at half past six.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

FONTHILL, May 10th, 1780.

Thank Heaven I am at length quiet and can write to you once more from a peaceful abode. I was received with great Tumult; but with such transports of Affection that I could not find it in my Heart to be displeased. When the Hurry was over and all desert and silent I ran across the Lawn, mounted the Hill of Pan and addressed myself to the Sylvan Deities in the midst of their consecrated Foliage. The reviving fragrance of the vegetation is not to be described, nor need it, to the Worshippers of Nature: they know the perfume she diffuses when awakened from her Winter's repose. The sunbeams heightening the dewy verdure of the Grove inspired me

with innumerable sensations lively and youthful as spring. The Birds were not more delighted with their comfortable Nests than I was with the green boughs that hung over them. I have every reason to think we live in the best intelligence and am half inclined to believe they are aware of my protection. The Rooks this year build ten Trees nearer than before and, whilst I sat on an Oak branch, whose yellow transparent leaves were just beginning to unfold themselves, a flight of Bullfinches perched immediately on the Sprays above my Head warbling their own Language and arranging their Feathers with perfect Freedom. I left the little Group conversing together and walked full in the Evening Sun to a Meadow on the opposite Side of the River embroidered all over with Cowslips which sent forth such fresh vernal Odours that I could not help throwing myself down amongst them. Some propitious Being seemed to have endowed this Spot with the power of relieving my anxieties [and] calming the tumult of my spirits, for no sooner did I breathe the perfume of the Flowers which blew all around me than a soft delusion stole over my senses—every passion was hushed, every Care vanished, the past and the future were equally indifferent and I enjoyed the present without reserve. But do not imagine this fortunate State was of long duration. After a few Instants the Charm dissolved and I found myself again the Victim of restless Desires. Now too plainly I perceived how vacant were these Meadows, how imperfect the pleasures they afforded ; and, rising from the Turf, I stepped into my Canoe and rowed disconsolately about I knew not whither, till the last Sunbeams faded away on the Hills and Forests were lost in shade. Then walking slowly across the Lawn I entered the peaceful Palace where Silence and Solitude reign undisturbed, and I think you will give me Credit for not invading their repose. One glimmering Lamp directed me to my Apartment, 'twas all I desired : more Light might have alarmed those ancient and venerable Spirits who reside in Vases ranged mysteriously around the Cell. Having preferred a short prayer to those concealed Intelligences I stretched myself out on Indian Carpets and drank my solitary Tea—Guess who I wish'd by my Side ?

Soon after the last letter was written, Beckford went

to London, and, a week after the Gordon Riots, made his bow at St. James's. "I went to Court with some of my opposition friends," he recalled the occasion long after, "who said if we did not go, the King would declare we were all leagued with Lord George. We went to keep up appearances on that occasion. I was too young to be an object of antipathy, or to take any part in politics, during my father's life." He went to a *levée* with Sir George Howard, the second husband of his aunt Elizabeth, and he thought he owed his favourable reception to the esteem in which that lady was held by the monarch. Soon after he entered, the King came out of his Closet, and, seeing the officer who had only the other day reluctantly been compelled to give the order to fire on the unruly mob, said to him in his queer gobble-gobble voice, "You peppered them well, I hope—peppered them well—peppered them well!" The levity of the remark disgusted the company, and the officer replied very gravely, "I hope your Majesty's troops will always do their duty." The rebuke failed to pierce the understanding of George III., who turned sharply to Beckford and said, "Well, I suppose all your chickens are dead," alluding to the fact that the Alderman had roofed his house with copper, an experiment which the King, who delighted to prophesy in such matters, had previously declared must infallibly kill everything under the roof by verdigris.

CHAPTER V

"DREAMS, WAKING THOUGHTS, AND INCIDENTS" (1780-1781)

Beckford again goes abroad : The places he visited : The letters he wrote during his tour : "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents" : A description of this work : His anxiety that it should be a success : The book printed, but suppressed on the eve of publication : Possible reasons for its suppression : False charges brought against Beckford

AFTER a stay in England of rather more than a year and a half, Beckford, again accompanied by Lettice, started on a Grand Tour that was to last until he had to return to Fonthill to attend his coming-of-age festivities. The travellers set out from London on June 19, 1780 ; and Beckford, who tells us "All through Kent did I doze as usual," happily found himself sufficiently wakeful the next day to announce his arrival at Margate.

I have passed the Ivory Gate and have entered the Empire of Dreams. The airy people are buzzing around one like Moths that haunt the honeysuckles of an Evening. Some of these phantoms are inconceivably beautiful, others so horrid and menacing that I shiver at their recollection—and feel at this very moment a cold sweat trickling down my Temples. You cannot conceive how many singular Anecdotes I have learnt of my Brother Dreamers since my arrival in this visionary Land. The great Tree which, if you recollect, shades the entrance of the infernal Regions swarms at this moment with *Cyranos de Bergerac* and Bishop Berkeley's Acquaintance, and the Bough immediately above my Head is so loaded with the *Familiars* of Arabians that if it breaks down I shall be

smothered for ever. Already half a hundred have detached themselves and adhere so closely to me that, had I the force of Neptune or Polypheme, I could not shake them off// I wish I could contrive a method of despatching two or three of these rainbow-coloured Children to you. I think they might cheer your confinement and solace your lonely Hours; for amongst this Multitude some are excellent Company, and one art they know in perfection . . . a most agreeable one in general—I mean that of not staying too long at a time—Alas, for my own part I have reason to complain of the contrary—It was but a moment ago that I thought myself securely placed at the very extremities of the Ocean, in an Isle of the smoothest greensward, Louisa at my side—and a voice like Pacchierotti's warbling in the Air. Judge whether I was not keenly disappointed when upon waking I found myself at Margate, ten blubbering Babes under my window, whilst Baron Wenzel the Oculist and a whole Legion of fresh imported Harlots were trumpetting in the other (an adjoining) Room. Would to Heaven these Fiddles (this combination of discordant sounds) would get out of their scrape; they drive me and my Visions to distraction. Morpheus moved off at the first Onset and the others are gathering up every poppy he left behind, so that in a few minutes I shall not have a single Phantom to look at, nor one aerial Companion to replace those from whom I am separated perhaps for ever. Yes, my suspicions are too justly founded, they spread their wings and vanish. All my Consolation is now that the murmurs of the Winds and the Surges so different from the vile artificial notes that grated my Ears t'other Moment may recall them.

I do flatter myself they will flutter around my Couch in the Cabin whispering the Story of *Ceyx* and *Alcyone* in my ear—or some other pathetic adventure in which they have borne a part—Farewell—the Vessel waits—the steamers float with a favourable wind—Lights glimmer amongst the Ships at a distance—Envy me, for I am going to be wrapped in the arms of Darkness and Illusions.

MARGATE, June 20th, 1780.

From Margate Beckford sailed to Ostend, and from

that town went to Antwerp, where with unusual industry he examined churches, public buildings, statuary, and pictures; and then to the Hague, where he was interested only in the Prince of Orange's cabinet of paintings and curiosities, and had subsequently something to say of a St. Anthony by "Hell-fire" Breughel.

The heavy air of the Netherlands weighs me down and I find it is in vain to struggle against the pressure. I deferred writing to you from Day to Day in hopes of recovering my spirits and being able to write something for the amusement of your solitude; but as I find my stupidity increase rather than diminish, I resolved to send you a line or two immediately lest my dulness should grow so great as to be infectious. O Genius of ancient Greece! what a horror is this Hague! what lazy Canals! what muddy-souled inhabitants! Yesterday I had the misfortune of dining with half a dozen *Butterburgs* at Sir J. Yorke's.* There was a total stagnation of wit and genius—but the currency of Roast Beef, Horn and collops of every species made ample amends according to Dutch Ideas. Not a word more can I commit to paper at present. My imagination sinks ten degrees in an instant, how long it will fall—the—Dæmon alone knows who conducted my steps into this slough of Despond.

HAGUE, June 29th, 1780.

"Well, thank Heaven, Amsterdam is behind us," he wrote from Utrecht a few days later, anxious to get further south; but at Spa he lingered a few days.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

I write to you from the confines of the Forest of Arden, once the delight of Chivalry. At this moment I survey its vast solitudes, which the twilight renders still more awful and interesting. The Town swarms with Idlers and Vagabonds. I left them dancing and fiddling to stray by myself amongst the Rocks and view the

* Joseph Yorke, afterwards Baron Dover (1724–1792), British Ambassador at the Hague.



HON. MRS. PETER BECKFORD
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

By permission of the Duke of Hamilton

distant Woods from their promontories. Would to God the memorable Fountains of Merlin were still attainable—I might then be happy with the hopes of forgetting a passion which preys upon my soul. I cannot break my chains—I struggle and the more attempts I make to shake them off the firmer they adhere to me. This wayward Love of mine makes me insensible to everything—I move feverishly from place to place—but it is in vain it pursues me—pursues me with such swiftness! seizes upon me and marks me for its own. . . . Delicious Hours that are gone for ever. Your recollection is my sole comfort. I live alone by your remembrance.

SPA, *July 7th*, 1780.

Bonn, Coblenz, Mayence, Oppenheim, Worms, Mannheim, Augsburg, Munich, Innsbruck, he passed through, and on July 31, he notes that he “entered at length my long-desired Italy”; then came Venice, Padua, Verona, Bologna, Florence, Lucca, where he again met Pacchierotti.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MISS BURNEY

LUCCA, *22 Sept.*, 1780.

I feel myself truly sensible of yr. kind enquiries. My Health gained little by the Spa waters, however. What little it gained will be sufficient I hope to bring me back to that dear Country which your society rendered so infinitely agreeable. How often have I regretted its absence and prayed Heav'n that I might be once more restored to its enjoyment. Then I should despise the assistance of Waters, and have found the only Balm which can tranquillize me in the affⁿ of my Friends. I gave a Concert at Spa which met with general approbation. The King of Spain was present—but I set little value upon his presence—Royal praise is an ornament of which I am far from being ambitious—as musical heads are seldom encircled with a Diadem. . . .

LUCCA, *Oct. 1st*, 1780.

✓ I continue rambling all day about the Hills I have mentioned. ✓ Of an Evening I walk on the ramparts with Pacchierotti, which are the only ornaments Lucca has to

boast. A fresh herbage shaded by well grown trees covers the whole circuit, and commands the most agreeably varied prospect of woody slopes and mountains I ever beheld. We distinguish the lofty peaks in the state of Genoa, and all the rocky extent of territory which borders the Tuscan Sea. How many times have we watched the Sun's going down, and wistfully pursued his retiring gleams! How many times have we longed to follow him, and visit the other hemisphere, there to remain on the banks of Orinoco, or at the base of the Andes. Will you join this solitary Scheme and consent to be forgotten and unknown? I care not a grain of Millet whether my name be engraven on marble or graces the annals of a Kingdom, not I. Give me but a secure retirement with those I love, surround me with impervious forests and keep off the World: keep off Ministers, Generals, Senators, Sportsmen, Courtiers, pedants and Sectaries. Give me ignorance and tranquillity, those may take science and labour that chuse. I envy not their portion. Let me dream away my existence in the lap of illusions. Let me fancy nature ten thousand times more lovely than she is, and don't tell me there are any higher spectacles than the setting sun, or any worthier occupations than calmly contemplating it. Flatter my laziness and tell me I am like one of those plants which bloom in a sequestered crevice of the rocks, and which but few are destined to discover, that amuse the eye with their flowers, but afford no fruit to refresh a weary traveller. I shall be contented with such commendations slight as they are. If ever you see ambition beginning to fire my bosom, quench the flame, and continually repeat that it is better to be meanly happy than illustriously miserable. I have never greater need to be reminded of this belief, than during some moments of Pacchierotti's declamation, which breathes such exalted heroism, that, forgetting my peaceful schemes, I start up, grow restless, stride about and begin to form ambitious projects. Musick raises before me a host of phantoms which I pursue with eagerness. My blood thrills in my veins, its whole current is changed and agitated. I can no longer command myself, and whilst the frenzy lasts would be willingly devoted to destruction. —These are perilous emotions and would lead me cruelly away. You see how perfectly our modern Timotheus is

my sovereign, and therefore as my friend advise him to change the louder tones of his harmony for such arcadian measures as persuade to the enjoyment of a rural life. If he takes your Council, we shall pass many an hour in the Woods and mountains, devoted to the worship of the good old Sylvanus—if not, throw open the barrier, and let me run my race, whatever oppose my progress.

To-morrow we set off for Leghorn thro' Pisa, which last mentioned city I am quite wild to see; Mr. L[ettice], who went there t'other day, having related such wonders of its Cathedral and Campo Santo. Had I not hopes of hearing Pacchierotti again at Venice during the carnival this would not be my last epistle from Lucca. Adieu, remember me sometimes, and recollect when you enjoy the Sun set from Windsor, and walk thro' the Meads in the glow he leaves behind him, that I am similarly employed

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* ALEXANDER COZENS

FLORENCE, Oct. 15th, 1780.

Your Letter breathes inspirations and I feel to my infinite comfort you are not degenerated. Be assured you will find me ever the same romantic Being fond of the Woods and Mountains—the Friend of sylvan powers and Votary of Pan. Italy seems my native Climate; it agrees perhaps but too well with the ardour of my imagination; for I am ten times more enthusiastic than ever. I thought I should have gone wild upon first setting my feet in the Gallery and when I beheld such ranks of Statues, such treasures of gems and bronzes—I fell into a delightful delirium—which none but Souls like ours experience, and, unable to check my rapture, flew madly from Bust to Bust and Cabinet to Cabinet like a Butterfly bewildered in an Universe of Flowers. Would to Heaven that you were but here that we might flutter together the whole day in this world of Elegance and when the Sun declines enjoy our favourite hour in the Woods of Bobbio—which cover, if you recollect, the Mountain behind the Palazzo Frith—I never view these shades without wishing for L[ouisa]. We would hide ourselves in the depth of the Thickets amidst bays and myrtles. None but the Birds should be conscious of our

retirement—but ah, how vain are the desires . . . whole Kingdoms separate us . . . I cannot bear the idea—I must return—Shall I ever again breathe the same atmoſp here? . . . tell me I ſhall—flatter my illuſions—tell me I am beloved. Do you know I would willingly loze the blood that animates me—to recall thoſe happy moments I have paſſed in her embraces. Can you not ſnatch an inſtant a little oftener to tell me you are well . . . adieu.

Sienna was reached on October 26, and three days later Rome, which inſpired ſome of the fineſt pages in Beckford's account of this tour. Then came Naples, where he ſtayed with his relative, Sir William Hamilton, and made the acquaintance of Lady Hamilton.* “She was a charming creature—I do not mean ‘the Nelson,’” he told Cyrus Redding near three ſcore years later. “The dawn of life then was as bright as the bay on which I looked every morning, and, making allowance for its vivid feelings, I ſay truth when I ſpeak of Lady Hamilton as an angel of purity. She lived, uncorrupted, in the miſt of the Neapolitan Court. You muſt have known what the court was, to comprehend this in its full meaning. I never ſaw ſo heavenly-minded a creature. Her power of muſical execution was wonderful—ſo ſweetly ſoft was her touch—ſhe ſeemed as if ſhe had thrown her own eſſence into the muſic. I uſed to liſten to her like one entranced. She died in 1782.” He made a paſſing alluſion to her in “Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents,” but elaborated this in his revised edition published in 1834. “Lady Hamilton ſat down to the pianoforte,” he wrote then. “No performer that I ever heard produced ſuch ſoothing effects; they ſeemed the emanations of a pure, uncontaminated mind, at peace with itſelf and benevolently deſirous of diffuſing that happy tranquillity

* Sir William Hamilton, the fourth ſon of Lord Archibald Hamilton (ſon of William, third Duke of Hamilton, by his wife, Lady Jane Hamilton, daughter of James, ſixth Earl of Abercorn), married in 1758 Miſs Barlow, daughter and heiress of Hugh Barlow, of Lawhenny Hall, Pembrokeshire.

around it; these were modes a Grecian legislature would have encouraged to further the triumph over vice of the most amiable nature." *

At Naples Beckford spent some of the happiest days of his life, realising the goodness of Lady Hamilton, and submitting gladly, eagerly to her influence—and how considerably she swayed his volatile nature his letters to her show very clearly. "What a house Sir William's was at Naples!" he exclaimed in his old age, remembering the kindly host and charming hostess. "There were all the clever people, the artists, the antiquarians, musicians, the beauty and gaiety of the city! It was my home."

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

NAPLES, *Novr.* 7, 1780.

Your charming lines of the 29th Sept. found me viewing our classic Bay from Sir Wm.'s [*i.e.* Sir William Hamilton's] Terrace and gazing with all my eyes earthly and spiritual upon the Island of Caprea. Why are you not at my side to share my sensations and fix the glorious scenery of the Clouds with your pencil? Next Summer, unless my hopes are frustrated, will see us I hope reposing under our own Cypresses at Fonthill and talking of Hesperia. I attempt neither description nor anything else in those short Letters which are only meant to tell you I am well and ask if you are so. Upon my return I shall lay whole Volumes before you. I saw your Friend H. at Rome, who seems to have a share of Taste but wants our fiery enthusiasm, without which life is dull and stagnant. Does your Son go on with my drawings? I hope he does—he cannot make too many. Having seen Italy I value them more than ever, if that be possible. My affect. Compliments wait upon him. Circe desires to be included in the remembrance since no Artist ever did ampler justice to her promontory.

The Sirens have been propitious and granted me—I am bold and vain enough to say—some few of their persuasive accents. Indeed I flatter myself I have gained considerably—how could I do otherways—hearing Lady

* "Italy, Spain, and Portugal" (ed. 1840), p. 122.

Hamilton every day, whose taste and feeling exceed the warmest ideas. I pass my whole time with her—she perfectly comprehends me and is more in our Style than any Woman with whom I am acquainted. My dear little Friend writes me the most affect. Letters I could desire—Judge therefore whether I do not think Naples the Garden of Irem and see bluer skies and brighter Sunshine than exist perhaps in reality—adieu.

NAPLES, *Nouv.* 16th, 1780.

It seems a sad long while since I have seen you. The World grows more and more irksome to me every Day and I am eagerly wishing for a Spirit like yours to comfort and revive my own. ~~Nothing~~ Nothing, I think, will prevent me daring to be happy in defiance of glory and reputation. Why should I desire the applause of Creatures I despise? rather let me enjoy that heartfelt satisfaction which springs from innocence and tranquillity! The peaceful Palace and woody Hills which surround it shall bound my desires. There will we remain—lost in our Meads and Copses, wandering carelessly about, offering sacrifice to sylvan Deities and fancying ourselves recalled to that primæval period when Force and Empire were unknown. I am now approaching the Age when the World in general expect me to lay aside my dreams, abandon my soft illusion and start into public Life. How greatly are they deceived how firmly am I resolved to be a Child for ever! Next Summer I hope will give you a proof of my constancy when if I return from Rome you will find me stretched under my beeches on the Hill of Pan, or running wildly amongst the Thickets which cover the Satyr's range.* At night we will retire to the Cell and consult our Arabians, penetrate into remote Countries and fancy we discover the high Mountains of *Gabel al Comar*. It shall be my business to collect prints and drawings which illustrate our favorite ideas, and I flatter myself with the hopes of passing many an Evening with you in their contemplation. Every month we shall invent some new Ornament for our Apartments and add some exotic rarity to its treasures. Our pleasures will be continually varying, sometimes we shall inhabit our Huts on the borders of the Lake, and sometimes our vast range of solemn subterraneous Chambers visible by the glow of Lamps and

* Stonehenge—on Salisbury Plain—fourteen miles from Fonthill.

filled with Cabalistic Images. . . . Another moment will find us encamped upon the green Desert we were so fond of, drinking our Coffee in open Tents and dreaming ourselves in *Yomen*—Next day perhaps we shall repair to the stone of power, where to speak the Language of Fingal; “Spirits descend by night in dark red streams of Fire.” In this imaginary style our Days will glide smoothly along and we shall sink into our Tombs contented tho’ inglorious.

CASERTA, *Nouv.* 30th, 1780.

I still remain here, quiet and happy with Lady Hamilton who is perfectly in our way—we see no body. Sir Wm. hunts all day long with the King upon the Mountains, whilst we indulge our imaginations at home and play strange dreams upon the piano-forte and talk in a melancholy visionary style which would recall your ancient ideas and fill you with pleasing sadness.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

ROME, *Wednesday, Dec. 6, 1780.*

In the first place let me begin with conjuring to you not to show my letters to any animal except your favourite dog Milk, who I am in hopes will tear them to pieces. Last night I arrived at Rome jaded to death with travelling four and thirty hours without resting an instant, and so miserable that I would have given the Indies for one of those comfortable potions which lull us to sleep for ever. An huge heap of letters lay awaiting my arrival, some of which throw me into the most dreadful agitations, and it struck one before I closed my eyes. You don’t know how unhappy I felt upon waking late this morning after a repose more like death than sleep not to find myself at Caserta and to think how far I was removed from you—from you who gave me so many proofs of your affection and treated me with so much tenderness. I hardly am yet sensible how I reached Rome. My journey was like a dream. Objects passed swiftly and unnoticed before my eyes. Just now the sun set, and the cliffs of Cajeta were glowing with ruddy light. Next instant Monte Cancelllo presented itself and the moon gleamed upon the tranquil

waters. A minute after all was darkness and gloom. Sometimes I hear the roar of the distant waves, and sometimes strange undetermined sounds which seem to issue from the mountains. You, I am certain, can easily comprehend this train of sensations and pity me from the centre of your heart. Ten thousand times have I wished myself with you once more in peace and solitude. I can venture expressing to you all my wayward thoughts—can murmur—can even weep in your company. After my mother you are the person I love best in the universe. I could remain with you all my life, listening to your music and your conversation. No words can express my wishes for the return of Spring, when I hope I shall have no cause to appear before you trembling and confounded. I form no conjectures about my destiny, but wait its decrees in fear and silence. Give my love to Sir Wm., and tell him how highly I value his affection. If I had strength and spirits I would say a great deal more—and even then should fail of expressing half what I think—but both fail me at this moment. You can form no idea how melancholy and dejected I am. Nothing but the desire of hearing from you could have made me write. For Heaven's sake send me a few lines immediately, and be assured whilst I am honoured with your remembrance I shall never forget myself. My meaning must be obvious to you since I have concealed nothing from your knowledge. I allowed you to look beyond the veil I am obliged to spread before other spectators. Your letter to Abbé Grant still sleeps in my portefeuille, but perhaps to-morrow I may deliver it.

December 8.

Let me know how your pantomime goes on and if R. looks very much like a divinity. Perhaps I may do my little endeavours towards rendering him a mere mortal in the Spring. "If I quench thee, thou flaming minister," I shall have effected great things indeed. Sunday I proceed. Pray write immediately if you have still any regard for your most obliged and affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

I hope you have written to my mother.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTONAUGSBURG, *Jany. 20th, 1781.*

At length, (my dear Lady Hamilton,) I am awake and see clearly around me. The gulf into which I was upon the point of being precipitated has disappeared and I am once more calm and happy. It is chiefly to you I owe this enviable state. Your influence prevailed, your words never ceased to sound in my ears till the good work they had in view was accomplished. To express the transport I feel at my deliverance would be impossible. The noble hopes that now begin to light up my bosom; the energies (if I may be allowed the expression) that revive [me], all, all are the effects of your affectionate advice. When I look back on the convulsive moments I have passed no words can paint my agitation. But they are gone—thank Heaven!—the frightful phantoms! 'Twas you who helped to dispel them. No sooner had I abandoned my Venetian state, and with it my fatal connection, than my spirits seemed to flow with redoubled activity. Recovering from the low and languid fever that so long had preyed upon me I ran lightly along the edge of the precipices and inhaled the pure air of the Tirol mountains with avidity—now contemplating the strange rocky promontories hung with icicles, and now the endless steeps covered with snow. I delivered myself up to my old imagination, the delight of my infant years, and formed a thousand wild conjectures about those who inhabited the cottage by the stream, guided the raft which floated on its surface, or were gathering odd herbs and ivies that spring from the cliffs in defiance of winter. This romantic disposition has lashed me quite to Augsburg. To-night I have been playing strange exotic tunes upon a harpsichord which your friend Mon^r. de Lamberg will soon have the glory of possessing. Such a harpsichord I think I never touched. I have bespoken its brother. I flatter myself that one day or other I may hear you awaken it. Did you ever read in some Lapland history of certain gnomes who lurk in the mines and chasms of tremendous mountains? The music I have just now been composing was exactly such, I imagine, as elves and pigmies dance to—brisk and humming—moody and subterranean. Few mortals except ourselves

have ears to catch the low whisperings which issue in dark hours from the rocks. Such I have heard in my late rambles through the Tirol. Without leaving the carriage I used to climb up a pine by moonlight and stick like a squirrel to its branches. You can conceive the pleasures of traversing vast groves of fir at that solemn hour on a clear frosty night when every star is visible, and enter into the mysteries of calculating their influences. Unless I am mistaken they are at present extremely favourable and promise happier days. One of the greatest pleasures they can procure me is a letter from you. How sorry I am to give up hopes of passing the spring at Portici and visiting the wild thickets of Calabria in your company. My constant prayers will be to return and listen to you whole hours without interruption. Never again do I flatter myself with the fond expectations of meeting another human being who can perfectly comprehend me. By way of contrast, how does Abbé Galiani? What a little sweet pug dog it is—yea, a pug dog who feeds upon sausages. Give my love to Sir Wm. and tell him that were I to endure as long as his mountains I should remember his kindness. Adieu, my dear Lady H. Let me hear constantly from you if you have any pity upon the anxieties of your most obliged and affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

STRASBURG, *Jan.* 28, 1781.

If I had but sufficient strength of mind to set prejudice at defiance—I care not a farthing whether the world thought me whimsical or no—I should change once more my resolution and instead of proceeding to England trace back my footsteps immediately to Naples. There I might hope to remain a few months in your company enjoying the spring on the coasts of your bay, and sharing with you my happy fantastic imagination. But I am fated, it seems, to return to a country where sober, sullen realities must put them all to flight—where I have no friend like you to sustain my spirits and receive my ideas except Mr. Cozens, whom you have heard me frequently mention. Not an animal comprehends me. At this

disastrous moment, too, when every individual is abandoned to terrors and anxieties, which way can I turn myself? Public affairs I dare not plunge into. My health is far too wavering. Whilst I write my hand trembles like that of a paralytic Chinese. Strange colours swim before my eyes and sounds keep ringing in my ears for which I can hardly account. This whole morning I have been condemned to the perusal of Jamaica letters filled, as you may imagine, with ruin and desolation. No language can describe the situation of that unfortunate colony Savannah le Mar which has felt the force of the hurricane. How dreadful the calm which preceded it! the silence, suspense and frowns of the elements! the solitary black cloud, its fatal path and destructive explosion. The West Indian seas seem to have been swept from one extremity to the other, and the ports of almost every Island strewn with wrecks and devastation. Happily for me the power of the storm and earthquake fell upon those villages in which I have least concern. But to what point the general confusion such an event creates will lead is more than I can at present determine. This is not a favourable moment to look around one. Both the Indies are convulsed and we are much in a similar state at home. Would to Heaven I could find out some vale immured in the bosom of mountains to which I could transport my books and my instruments. I would send you a clue to enter my labyrinth as soon as it was formed, but scarce any other beings should know that it existed. For ambitious spirits this is not the period to shrink out of the way. Danger and difficulties are their pavements. But I no longer feel myself bold enough to tread such monsters under foot. Once upon a time I fancied myself filled with ambition. I looked this very morning and could not find a grain.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

PARIS, *Feb.* 10th, 1781.

I cannot help confessing my weakness to you . . . negligence distracts me. Why did the little Dove miss the opportunity of safely conveying her Letter when you offered to take care of it.—This want of sensibility on her

part makes me more miserable than I can express. I wander about this gay glittering Town plunged in my melancholy reflections and lost to the splendid tumult in which I live. In the midst of a great Ball or at a pompous Supper where every face is brightened by conscious beauty or magnificence, my heart fails me, my countenance changes, dark clouds of thought come over me and I seem sinking to the ground. You can define and pity the cause of this melancholy transfiguration.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

PARIS, *Feby.* 10, 1781.

I am settled as calmly as you could desire, my dear Lady H. My frantic agitations are no more. I pass my hours in a solitary, melancholy manner that soothes my mind. Every now and then I lull myself to sleep with my wild melody. I find myself transported to Caserta. I see the brown hills which environ it, and hear the winds talking to each other in the foliage—Your voice seems mingled with their murmurs, and these, your visionary accents, breathe a certain pathetic tone which makes me often awake in tears. How could I leave you? Would to Heaven I had remained instead of taking that fatal journey to Venice, and throwing myself headlong into perils and misfortunes. Their recollection makes me start and look trembling around like a person just roused from a feverish dream. Your letters of 1st and 9th January are just arrived and fill me with the most grateful and affectionate sensations. I will never call myself unhappy whilst I possess your friendship.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON, Naples

PARIS : HOTEL D'ESPAGNE,
20th *Feb.*, 1781.

You contribute more to my happiness than any human being, and if you were but sensible of the effect your letters have upon me you would wish the post went out every morning. My spirits revive, let them be ever so dejected, the instant your handwriting appears. Like a talisman it dissolves every vapour that clouds my atmo-

sphere and fills me with exultation. I cannot describe how much I sympathise with your ideas of the *Iliad*. That awful march you have composed vibrates in my ears. Perhaps, if I am not too presumptuous, I have been playing this very evening a composition which greatly resembles it. I shall remain contentedly at Paris a month or six weeks longer. This is the land of oriental literature and I am once more running over my favourite poems—The expedition of Alexander in search of the fountain of Immortality and the affecting tale of Megnoun and Leilah. Why cannot I mount the Hippogriff and fly with my volumes to Naples? I long to hear of the passages from the *Odyssey* which have last attracted your attention. Remember you are in the neighbourhood of the Circean Rock. I should enlarge upon this memorable promontory, but the post is going out this instant, and a legion of stupid visitors are coming in. What shall I do? I have only time to beg you will give my love to Sir William, to implore your never missing a mail, and to assure my dear Lady H. how sincerely I remain her

Most affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

The V. de Choiseul has not come in my way. If he is your friend I am extremely sorry for it. Mention to Lady Morton that her son is everything she could most desire.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to GASPARA PACCHIEROTTI

PARIS, 12 March, 1781.

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of employing the few moments I have to spare in writing to you, my dear Pacchierotti, and in beseeching you will not forget your promise of coming to Fonthill—There you will enjoy tranquillity in the midst of those who are truly sensible of your excellence,—without hearing idle talk and vulgar clamours.

Let me entreat you to return once more to me and your good friend Lady Mary.* Abandon that capricious

* This reference to Lady Mary is elucidated by an extract, copied by Beckford, and preserved among his papers, from the *Morning Post*, Saturday, December 19, 1789:

Lady Mary Duncan is more engaged with Pacchierotti in the study

Town of Venice, and despise its empty acclamations—Your musical conceptions are far too noble and transcendent for the corrupt, enervate Audiences of [*illegible*]. A few silly women and their puny Dangers, are not calculated to feel the heroism of “Sabinus” or “Quinto Fabio.” Your song is of a loftier nature than that to which Italy for these many Ages has been accustomed. So touching a voice and so sublime a manner would have inspired a second Curtius to have cast himself into the Gulph, and another Regulus to have returned to certain Death for the welfare of his Country. I have always thought you inspired, my dear Pacchierotti, and were this the season of Inspiration, a statue would be decreed to your Honour. Ingratitude is but too common in these modern times—or else what treasures would reward the transports you have occasioned.

For my own part, I feel the weight of my obligations—and shall never be happy till I have discharged them.—Give me an opportunity, my dear Friend—relinquish your journey to Mantua—and return without delay to England. I think of settling at Fonthill in June—and could you but do the same, I should cease to think myself unhappy. You will find my attachment invariable. It is more than a Day we have passed together, and every hour increased my good opinion. If you act wisely, my dear Friend, if you value an existence which does so much honour to Humanity—if, in short, you have any regard for me—take a firm resolution—and before two months elapse, let me repeat to you over and over again—how sincerely I am

Your most affectionate and obliged Servant

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

My best Comp^{ts} to Beston—who I hope will accompany you—and to whom I beg you will present the warmest assurance of my attachment.

of Ancient Musick, and by their mutual efforts they have made considerable progress—simple *contrapunto* may soon be got through, and as soon be abandoned; it suited not the extreme refinement of their parts.—*Descant upon plain Song* did not occupy them much longer.—Now they are got into the more intricate subtleties of the Art, working in the way of *Contrary Motion*, running *fugues* on agreeable passages, taking points *per assim* and *thesin*, moving divisions *recte* and *retro*, &c.—Long may their Modulations be prolonged! and long may their final Cadence be retarded

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

Your Letter of the 6th March, my dear Louisa, found me absorbed in Musick bent over my instrument and dissolved in Tears. I had just received a few Lines from my dearest Friend, and was recalling to my mind the tranquil hours we had passed together—Shall I ever be again so fortunate, must I bid an eternal farewell to those enchanting moments? Will he lose that amiable childishness we doat upon? No—I flatter myself he will not—his Letters breathe its genuine spirit and are tinted with our own beloved melancholy—Adieu, remember next Summer we shall be wafted to Hesperia and enjoy its fables and Sunshine—Write me an answer immediately however short. In a month we shall probably meet—what consolation there is in that idea—Goodnight—I will dwell upon it.

PARIS, *Wednesday, March 14th, 1781.*
10. O'clock Eve.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

PARIS, *April 2d, 1781.*

You do not know how unlucky I think myself never to receive any of your letters. Why, my dear Lady Hamilton, have you forgotten they were my greatest consolation? I would give worlds to fly to Naples and ask in person the reason of your silence. But I have solemnly promised my mother to return and in about a week shall set forwards, I believe, for England. How I enjoyed your Italian spring, your soft sea breezes and transparent sky. Had I not been infatuated, we should have enjoyed them together. Music is ever my principal delight and comfort, and I am cruelly abused for loving it so well. Lord Morton reads me many a severe lecture upon this subject, and, waxing wiser and wiser, increaseth in stiffness every day. I fear I shall never be half so sapient nor good for anything in this world, but composing airs, building towers, forming gardens, collecting old Japan, and writing a journey to China or the moon. There are not many to whom I would make so extravagant a confession, but in you, my dear Lady Hamilton, I place my whole soul of confidence.

Pray let me be informed a little how you pass your time at present and whether Sir William be still Nimroding it away upon the mountains.

MARGATE, *April 14th*, 1781.

I am just landed shaking every nerve and casting eager looks towards [*word illegible*]. The Eve is clear and cool, the Sun set red and troubled, I have been walking on a green open field which crowns a cliff, and deploring my strange fate, that fatal power of distracting others and of imbibing myself too soft—too fond affections. . . . What Adventures have I to relate, my dear Friend, . . . They will make you tremble. . . . Come to me in the course of to-morrow Eve that I may have the comfort of telling you again and again how sincerely I am your aff.

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Fuller particulars of this Continental excursion are to hand in the volumes, "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents," written by Beckford, and based upon notes made by him during the tour, "my memory," he said, "supplying what was wanted." The book is made up of impressionist sketches made as his mind dictated, and nowhere did he allow himself to be shackled by the rules laid down for their guidance by the compilers of works of travel. If any one wants particulars of any town, topographical or historical, it is not to "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents" he must refer; but if he desires exquisite word-pictures inspired by a brilliant imagination and conveyed with great literary skill, these he can find to his heart's content.

Shall I tell you my dreams? (So runs the opening passage.) To give an account of my time is doing, I assure you, but little better. Never did there exist a more ideal being. A frequent mist hovers before my eyes, and, through its medium, I see objects so faint and hazy, that both their colours and forms are apt to delude me. This is a rare confession, say the wise, for a traveller to make: pretty accounts will such a one give of outlandish countries: his correspondents must reap great benefit, no doubt, from such purblind observations. But stop, my

good friends; patience a moment!—I really have not the vanity of pretending to make a single remark, during the whole of my journey: if —— be contented with my visionary way of gazing, I am perfectly pleased; and shall write away as freely as Mr. A., Mr. B., Mr. C., and a million others whose letters are the admiration of the politest circles.

In many ways these sketches are but a further series of letters not dissimilar to the introspective correspondence already printed in this work: they contain the same self-examination, the same interest in the effect of places and scenes upon the writer, together with eloquent descriptions of nature—of which the following may be given as an instance.

The next post brought us over hill and dale, grove and meadow, to a narrow plain, watered by rivulets and surrounded by cliffs, under which lies scattered the village of Wollrathshausen, consisting of several cottages, built entirely of fir, with strange galleries hanging over the way. Nothing can be neater than the carpentry of these simple edifices, nor more solid than their construction; many of them looked as if they had braved the torrents which fell from the mountains a century ago; and, if one may judge from the hoary appearance of the inhabitants, here are patriarchs who remember the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria. Orchards of cherry-trees impend from the steeps above the village, which to our certain knowledge produce no contemptible fruit.

Having refreshed ourselves with their cooling juice, we struck into a grove of pines, the tallest and most flourishing perhaps we ever beheld. There seemed no end to these forests, save where little irregular spots of herbage, fed by cattle, intervened. Whenever we gained an eminence it was only to discover more ranges of dark wood, variegated with meadows and glittering streams. White clover and a profusion of sweet-scented flowers clothe their banks; above, waves the mountain-ash, glowing with scarlet berries; and beyond, rise hills and rocks and mountains, piled upon one another, and fringed with fir to their topmost acclivities. Perhaps the Norwegian

forests alone equal these in grandeur and extent. Those which cover the Swiss highlands rarely convey such vast ideas. There, the woods climb only half way up their ascents, and then are circumscribed by snows: here, no boundaries are set to their progress, and the mountains, from their bases to their summits, display rich unbroken masses of vegetation.

As we were surveying this prospect, a thick cloud, fraught with thunder, obscured the transparence of the horizon, whilst flashes startled our horses, whose snorts and stampings resounded through the woods. What from the shade of the firs and the impending tempests, we travelled several miles almost in total darkness. One moment the clouds began to fleet, and a faint gleam promised serener hours, but the next all was gloom and terror; presently a deluge of rain poured down upon the valley, and in a short time the torrents, beginning to swell, raged with such fury as to be with difficulty forded. Twilight drew on, just as we had passed the most terrible; then ascending a steep hill under a mountain, whose pines and birches rustled with the storm, we saw a little lake below. A deep azure haze veiled its eastern shore, and lowering vapours concealed the cliffs to the south; but over its western extremities a few transparent clouds, the remains of the rays of a struggling sunset, were suspended, which streamed on the surface of the waters, and tinged with tender pink the brow of a verdant promontory.

After his return to Fonthill Beckford worked hard at the task of converting his notes into a work that should be at least a *succès d'estime*.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. JOHN LETTICE

FONTHILL,

Augst. 31st, 1781.

I begin to despair of ever seeing you again at Fonthill and shall think soon you are as rooted to your Hill as its Laurels. We have a mighty bustle here and a beastly confusion of workmen from which the Lord deliver me; but I have got a trick of going to Whitham and exploring its deep glades and branching oaks, with Mrs. P. Beckford.

I am impatient to have you look over my Italian Journey and will do my best to make it worth looking at. Unless there is a good solid trunk that cuts fair and sound in the grain I would not give a farthing for leaves and flowers, so I propose being wise and solemn in the Letter of reflections and not luxuriant and sentimental. Yesterday arrived a fine Epistle from Count B. so full of quaint Compliments and high flown Speeches that I was quite bewildered. Madame ——'s imagination is inexhaustible ; but I think the Count's golden vein begins to be mixed with baser metals.

You know I have set my heart upon the success of my book, and shall not at all relish its being only praised as a lively, picturesque excursion. A great Painter who plays upon the violin had much rather be complimented upon his Musical talent than for his excellence in his profession. . . .

The further history of “Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents” may here be told. In April 1782, Beckford was able to report that the work was finished ; but as he took the manuscript with him when shortly after he went abroad, “we can not publish till after Christmas,” he told the Rev. Samuel Henley ; but he consoled himself for the delay as this was “the best moment too, I believe.” In due course the book, a handsome quarto, was printed and bound, and it was about to appear in the spring of 1783 when Beckford determined to suppress it.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

April 13, 1783.

I have been considering and reconsidering, and cannot reconcile myself in the least with the idea of committing my *Dream* to the wide world, therefore must beg you will stop advertisements, entries at Stationer's Hall, etc. etc. Don't too imagine I shall change my mind any more, this determination is as fixed as the sun. As for the copies I shall have them locked up like my title-deeds. Not one shall transpire, so Hamilton must go without his *large*

paper for some years to come. I have desired Mr. Wildman to settle everything concerning expenses.*

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

COLOGNY, near GENEVA,
Nov. 18th, 1783.

. . . You have the only copy which exists of the only production of mine which I am not ashamed of, and with which I am not disgusted. Thank God, Vathek at least has produced no misunderstandings, and I may still dwell upon its recollections with pleasure, but how can I endure my *Book of Dreams* when I reflect what disagreeable *waking thoughts* it has occasioned us. If you have a mind to reconcile me to it, let me be assured you are not less my affectionate friend than when you silenced the hiss of serpents at Fonthill. Neither Orlando nor Brandi were ever more tormented by demons and spectres in an enchanted castle than William Beckford in his own hall by his nearest relatives.

The story goes that Beckford suppressed "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents" by the advice of his friends, who represented that the brilliant imagination therein displayed would create a prejudice against him when he should enter the more practical field of public life; but it can scarcely be seriously contended that this was the reason why at the eleventh hour the book was withdrawn. From the first of the two letters printed above it might be deduced that the author was not satisfied with the merits of the book; but the second letter hints at some other cause. As a matter of fact there were

* Six copies, it is said, were preserved; and of these one is in the British Museum Library and two are in the Charter Room at Hamilton Palace. One of the Hamilton Palace copies is that used by Beckford when revising the work for inclusion in "Italy, Spain and Portugal," and this contains copious notes and alterations in the author's handwriting.

In 1891 the late G. T. Bettany reprinted (from the copy in the British Museum), "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents," with others of Beckford's works in a volume of the "Minerva Library," entitled "Vathek and European Travels."

rumours, started no one knows how, of grave misconduct on Beckford's part, and probably it was thought that the romantic tendencies laid bare in the work might give some colour to them. These rumours endured through Beckford's life, and the scandal was certainly widely circulated; but there seems to have been absolutely no ground whatever for the charges. That Beckford should deny them was of course, and indeed he protested passionately against them; but even John Mitford, an envenomed critic of the life of his brother author, had to admit that Samuel Richard White, Beckford's solicitor, a man who knew more about the matter than any other, after his client's death, as during his lifetime, always believed in his innocence. The subject is distasteful and happily need not further be pursued beyond saying that neither in “Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents,” nor in any other of Beckford's works, is there a line that could possibly give countenance to the rumours.

CHAPTER VI

COMING OF AGE (1781)

Beckford returns from his second Continental tour : Stays awhile in London : Goes to Fonthill : Invitations sent out for a house-party at Fonthill for Beckford's coming of age : The festivities on that occasion : "A fine frenzy for three days" : Visits Mount Edgumbe

RETURNING from his second Continental tour earlier than was the original intention Beckford landed at Margate on April 14, 1781 ; and, proceeding to London, stayed awhile with his mother at West End, before going to Fonthill.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON.

LONDON, *April 20th*, 1781.

English phlegm and frostiness nips my slight texture to death. I cannot endure the composed indifference of my Countrymen. What possessed me to return amongst them ? The Island is lovely without doubt—its woods and verdure unparalleled. But such inhabitants ! Ye Gods ! why cannot I drive them all headlong into the sea and have the vacant space to myself and such beings as you whom I love from the depth of my heart ? London is sillier than ever and more ridiculously dissipated. My health will not permit me to join the universal whirl if I had ever so great an inclination. Everybody raves about Mon^r Vestris and is astonished that I care not how high nor how lightly he capers. And yet these poor enthusiasts have no tolerance. Every one speaks in raptures of music and Pacchierotti. Must I wait till a peace for the satisfaction of seeing you and listening again to your divine music—the only sounds which can soothe and tranquillize my mind ? I cannot bear the idea of waiting

so long—I say, so long, for unless I am egregiously mistaken we have nothing in perspective but war and desolation. I shall forget these horrors when engaged up in my forests at Fonthill, and not stir from my retirement unless it be in company with Ulysses. Dont you think I must take care not to follow him into the flowery land of Lotus? You know, my dear Lady Hamilton, I am already but too apt to forget myself.

You cannot imagine with what emotion I play over the airs which remind me of Caserta and the solitary hours we have passed together. I still seem to view the brown autumnal tints of the mountains. I hear the rushing of the torrent. How often have I heard its hoarse and angry murmur at midnight when my sleep was scared by frightful dreams, and my mind a prey to the most cruel agitations. You pitied me—nay more—it is to your affectionate advice I owe the comparative calm of my present existence. Do not, however, imagine that it is not too frequently broken in upon. I am pestered with visitors to such a degree that I wish myself in Nova Zembla. Every morning there is a fall of tickets at my door where they lie as deep as snow reproaching me for the secret but steady resolve of never returning them. What can I do? Good night. I am forced to break off in a hurry. My mother begs I would add a great many kind things in her name. I have but an instant left and that I cannot resist employing in imploring you to write to your affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Assure Sir William that I think of him almost every-day and regret not being able to visit the rocks of Victis in his company beyond expression. Give my best compliments to that oddity Tierney and pray let me know if the Galuzzi be at Naples.

April 25th 1781.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

WEST END, *June 10th 1781.*

It is a soft warm evg. I sit in a tent with my eyes half closed and fancy I discover your labyrinth at the

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base of Vesuvius, its broom and cypress waving with the breeze from the bay. Even your form, though faint and hazy, seems to appear at a distance. Why must I awake from such pleasing illusions? I find myself so near that ugly word, "London"! My health does not allow me to see it through a flattering medium. Had I but spirits to enter into its vanities who knows but I might be the last to discover them. In less than three weeks I shall be established at Fonthill in the midst of my lawns and thickets. No fashionable vagabonds, I hope, will invade my retirement. You know what a strange nervous being I am, and how unfit for everyday society. But, thank Heaven, I am much less exotic than I was, and far more inclined to be reasonable. In time probably I may descend to the ordinary level—at least I hope so—for my head feels giddy in soaring so high in the air. Though probably contented in this good Island I cannot help sighing after the shores of Posilippo and the clear azure which makes it appear to such advantage. I wish I was a squirrel to hang on the pines which impend above the grot, or some gay fly that haunts the inaccessible crevices of the cliffs which bloom with flowers. But after all I had better retain my own form lest you should be alarmed at my leaps or startled by my flutterings. I long to hear more favourable accounts of your health, and if I remain a fortnight without receiving my letter shall tremble and be miserable. Spare me then, my dear Lady Hamilton, and do not omit writing if only a line. Consider how earnest I am when you are the subject of my thoughts, and believe I shall never forget your kindness. What would I not give to have some conversation with you upon the Iliad. I am vain enough to imagine I should make you less averse to Achilles. Hector is doubtless more amiable but what feeling breast can refrain to sigh with the young Grecian and his agonising on the shore after the murder of Patroclus. I compose much all day long, and could sing you an air more plaintive than *Caro Luci*. You will not be concerned to hear, I believe, that I think of Venice with indifference. I look back on my past dreams with contempt and coolness. Wish me joy, my dear Lady Hamilton, and be conscious you are the chief cause of my present serenity. Adieu. Give my love to Sir William and express how gratefully I

remember his affection. Need I say that I am your most obliged and most affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

FROM MY CELL, *July 2nd, 1781.*

My eyes are better ; but would have been much more so had they but seen you last Wednesday. . . . The pure air of the range has greatly relieved my cold and of consequence my Spirits. I suffer myself to be lulled by the murmurs of Pan in his favorite grove, and when Evening draws on listen to the Language of the Rooks with attention—all this is amendment, for in the great City where most was required I paid no attention to anything. . . .

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

FONTHILL, *July 14th, 1781.*

This is an age of wonders. Astronomers prate about an orb which has just made its appearance in the neighbourhood of the sun fraught with a deluge. For ought I know to the contrary an earthquake has shoved Naples beyond the Great Wall of China or surely I should have received ere now another letter from my dear Lady Hamilton.

We are appalled with no prodigies at Fonthill, but vegetate like the trees in an ordinary manner. The lawns are beautifully green and the hills Arcadian, yet I think to transplant myself to Naples and enjoy a little conversation with you. It is a long dismal while since I have heard what has become of you. I should have no objection to setting out immediately on purpose to see. Are you at Portici or Posilippo ? Do you walk under the favourite pines in the wood you used to tell me about, or do you read Homer in the pagliers amongst myrtle thickets on the mountain's side ? I hope you often touch your pianoforte. In that case I think you will sometimes recollect me, and I confess I cannot bear the idea of being forgotten. Mr. Lettice has just returned to London. Burton is here and we compose from morning till evening. Next month arrives Pacchierotti. What an unspeakable delight to Lady Mary Duncan. Ten to one but she marches to Fonthill and the organ shall open its loudest stops to trumpet forth her praises. I never

allow it to rattle but upon great occasions, and then cotton up my ears—with profound veneration. My mother urges me without ceasing to visit our holy uncle at Bath, the everlasting C[harles] H[amilton] who, it seems, is building a house to his garden and adding peach house to grape house and pinery to pinery on the slope of the crescent hill which is already more than half embroidered with his vagaries. Till I do hear a little how you are I think not one line more shall you receive from your most sincere and affectionate

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Sir William Hamilton prophesied there would come a time when I should rarely be blessed with your letters. Heaven avert so desolate a period.

Mrs. Beckford desired that her son's coming-of-age should be celebrated with great festivities, and she, and at her request, Beckford, sent out in August invitations to a large number of relations and friends to stay at Fonthill at the end of September.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE HON. MRS. HARCOURT

I wish from my heart that your Camp lay extended on the Downs which we look at from Fonthill as in that case the desire of seeing you there next September would not be so very inordinate. Most of my Friends will be assembled. Why not give me the greatest of satisfactions—that of seeing you amongst the number? Col. Harcourt must think me one of the strangest of Animals for making so extravagant a request and I shall never believe that Miss Danby has done wondering till to her great surprize she finds herself at Fonthill—I will then try at least to persuade her that there is nothing or ought to be nothing extraordinary in going above a hundred Miles perfectly out of one's way to see a friend by inspiration. Our acquaintance, you know, began under that glorious Power's immediate influence and I see no objection to its being continued in the same strain. Now I dare say you will laugh at the seriousness with which I entertain hopes of my petition not being rejected—nay, the more

if it is—let me tell you I shall be Fool enough to be seriously disappointed.

Cozens is here very happy, very solitary and almost as full of Systems as the Universe.* . . . Since I left London—I have heard no more of a certain beauteous personage whose incursion filled us mutually with alarms.—Continue to be firm and resolute, but above all things take a resolution of being at Fonthill the 28th of September and celebrating with us the Vigil of all Goose day.†

FONTHILL, *Augt. 15th, 1781.*

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LORD THURLOW

Aug. 17, 1781.

MY LORD,

I am encouraged by my Mother to put yr. L^p in mind of the agreeable Hopes you gave me of casting another Look upon Fonthill—and if not taking too great a liberty to request the Honour of your Company particularly on the 28th and 29th of Sept. Many of my friends will be then assembled, and it is not to be expressed with what pleasure and exultation I should see your Lordship among the number.

My Mother desires her best Comp^{ts}, and I remain with the highest respect and affection,

Your Lordship's most obedient and humble Serv^t,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

LORD THURLOW to WILLIAM BECKFORD

1781.

DEAR SIR,

From the first hour I knew you I have taken great interest in your welfare, and have seen your improvement advance with sincere satisfaction. If my Partiality does not deceive me, Few have attained Their Majority more amply prepared to take upon themselves

* This is a reference to Alexander Cozens, the artist, who had written a book on "Principles of Beauty relative to the Human Head," and was now engaged in the preparation of "A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing original loose positions of Landscape."

† Although Beckford's birthday was October 1, it was found more convenient to celebrate his majority on Michaelmas Day.

their own Government, and I shall congratulate you on the event with unmixed satisfaction. I shall be much mortified, if any accident should prevent my attending you at Fonthill by the 28th of Sept.

I am,

with perfect regard

Dear Sir

Your most faithful & affectionate
Friend & Servant

THURLOW.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE DUCHESS OF BEDFORD

Sept. 8, 1781.

Your Grace will certainly think me very unreasonable in proposing a party—above an hundred miles off—and still more vain in flattering myself that yr. Grace will take the trouble of coming as far as Fonthill—where we are to have some dancing and music on the 28th September and the following days.

If the Miss Vernons love dancing, and have any faith in Pacchierotti perhaps they may join with me in persuading your Grace to honour us with your presence. The Duke will hardly think it worth while to take a journey across Salisbury Plain for a Ball—or else I should be very happy to see him.

My Mother desires her best Comp^{ts}, and I have the honour to remain—

Your Grace's very obedient and humble Servant,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.*

The birthday festivities differed in no way from those customary on such occasions among wealthy county magnates. A great party was assembled at Fonthill, and for a week there were music and dancing, illuminations and feasting. On Friday, September 28th, most of the guests had arrived and one hundred persons sat down to breakfast in the great arched Grecian Hall; and no less than three times the number were present at the five o'clock

* The Duke and Duchess of Bedford had other engagements for the end of September.

dinner. After dinner there was a ball and supper given to the neighbouring gentry, and dancing and card-playing were kept up until dawn. On Saturday, the park of Fonthill was crowded with the inhabitants of surrounding villages, and dinner was served in three great booths : two hundred of the Wiltshire tenantry and their sons were regaled in one of these ; the others being reserved for the people of Hinton, men, women, and children, to the number of one thousand—Hinton being a town in Beckford's parliamentary interest. To the seven or eight thousand other folk food and beer were distributed in the open. Beckford gave a grand dinner to his friends and neighbours, and indulged them with a concert of vocal and instrumental music, in which the particular star was Pachierotti ; after which the grounds were illuminated, bonfires were lighted, and fireworks displayed. On Sunday Dr. Lettice preached ; and on Monday, to the host's immense satisfaction, the company, except about a score of his intimates, departed.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

It is a gloomy Night and I am sitting on the summit of the House by a Reservoir where Water falls drop by drop. At intervals I discover the slow journey of the Moon thro' misty clouds. Deep below—in the great portico—are several people walking backwards and forwards,—I think disconsolately—or do I only imagine so because I myself—your poor W^m—am melancholy and disconsolate.—What different scenes you survey at Naples—clear azure above—and beneath a pure expanse of Ocean which the Moon spangles with brilliants.—Must I not enjoy these happy prospects with my dear Lady Hamilton ?—Will you condemn me to this murky spot—like an Enchantress that binds an aerial spirit to the Earth ?—Can I not hurry to see you with the sanction of your approbation—and say, presenting myself before you—“ Here am I escaped from the tempests of England—from politics, commotions, and brawls—will you not shelter me ? ”—What good can such a Being as me be of—in our

boisterous Parliament? Enter it I must—but 'tis my own fault if I sacrifice to Ambition both Health and enjoyment.—No, let me be happy and flutter in the light—a few years longer.—Let me spread the wings of imagination a season—Age will soon draw on—and the gay texture be shrivelled—Then I will mump, growl, snarl, bite, and be political—This Morn—yr. aff. Letter of the 7th was delivered me—and I leaped for joy—and ran wildly over my Lawn—and up the hill and down on the other side—into a retired valley—where I mused upon its contents a full Hour.—Alas, it is very true—musick destroys me—and what is worse I love being destroyed.—Rather had I die in this style than live in any other. You have no idea to what a pitch my voice and expression has risen—and will be sorry to learn that I sing far better than when you used to hear me at Caserta.—My beautiful cousin, Mrs. P. B^d—Lord Rives's Daughter—is with us at present—and has imbibed with avidity—ten thousand insinuating notes in the style—of Caro Luci. I wonder what Dæmon presides over this dangerous melody—if I knew, I would entreat him to withdraw his influence—and beg some sober psalm-singing Angel to grant me his sleepy protection.—Ask Sir W^m in the name of conscience—what harm your fair climate will do me?—For I cannot be more relaxed—unless dissolving intirely I was to mix with some other element.

Your Abbé Sterkel I believe is as mad as myself. Why do you not banish him to Lapland? You who are more sensible than all of us put together ought to be prescribed to take up your residence on the banks of Hudson's Bay—track Elks every day on the snow, and be refreshed with train oil of an Evening.—Are you not ashamed to remain in so enervating a region as Italy?—Get along—and take a fair mansion with 50 casements in front at Augsburg—and a Villa at Einsiedeln—and give dinners to Burgomasters' wives—and coop yourself up in a black velvet petticoat.—No cutting out of antique Figures—no reading about Hector and Achilles—no writing to such a Trifler as me—Bibles you shall enjoy—provided you double down the book of Job, Isaiah—and other poetical prophets—Sir W^m shall never open his Lips about Vesuvian or Etruscan vases—your fingers, eternally mimped up in a decent pair of mittens, shall forget their

Divine excursions on the piano Forte—in short you shall lose all fire and sentiments—cease quavering—grow fat,—dull,—lumpish,—and reasonable.

FONTHILL, 30th Aug^r, 1781.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

FONTHILL, Oct. 14th, 1781.

Am I doomed never to hear from you again, my dear Lady Hamilton, and must I believe the heats of Naples are more oppressive than those of Bengal? My time of late has been lost in perpetual bustle, and Fonthill exhibited an appearance little better than Bartholomew Fair. Were you to know the crowds that have pressed in upon me, the swilling of punch, the cramming of venison, the torrent of fulsome compliments and begging epistles, you would allow perhaps that I had sound reason for wishing myself at Naples. Can you wonder that the charming scenery of the bay is continually present to my imagination, and that I would give up anything almost to ramble about the coasts of Baiæ in your company? How I should delight in climbing the promontory of Miseno and finding you seated upon its summit! What long interesting evening conversations we might enjoy in those solitary situations! Do you recollect the ruined columbariums near Agrippino's tomb overgrown with myrtle? Are not those spots for us to ramble in? I recollect everything. I remember too well. I often wish I had no more memory or keen and nervous feelings than your dog that grows slick upon milk and macaroni. My spirits are not sufficiently rampant to describe the tumult of balls, concerts and illuminations in which we were engaged here a fortnight ago. I will only say that Pacchierotti, Tenducci, and Rauzzini, sang like superior beings in a little opera composed upon the occasion; that Burton played like one possessed, and all the world danced like demoniacs. It was a fine frenzy for three days, and not being able to sleep soundly the whole time I had not the misfortune of coming to myself, and was as gay as my neighbours. Above ten thousand people all neatly dressed covered the lawn and the hills which rise over it. The glory of bright blue coats and scarlet farthingales made the distant slopes as gay as a field of poppies. Whilst women and children ran frolicking

about the terraces, the farmers and substantial tradesmen were feasting in tents erected below at regular distances. The view from the noble portico of the house presented that of a great piazza 600 feet by 460 feet. Most travellers were reminded of the area of St. Peter's, and you may imagine the thousands and thousands of lamps that shone forth as soon as it was evening did not destroy the illusion. The bold spaces of the colonnades and loftiness of the portico certainly favoured it. On the desert down which terminates the woody region of Fonthill blazed a series of fires. Their light was doubtless the reverse of mournful, but still perhaps you would have thought of Troy and the funeral of Hector. Every now and then the shouts of the populace and the sound of the wind instruments filled the air. At intervals mortars were discharged and a girandola of rockets burst into clear bluish stars that cast a bright light for miles. On the left of the house rises a lofty steep mantled with tall oaks amongst which a temple of truly classical design discovers itself. This building (sacred to the Lares) presented a continued glow of saffron-coloured flame, and the throng assembled before it looked devilish by contrast. As soon as the arch which formed the entrance to the temporary square was lighted up and the whole range of tents illuminated, the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, Lady Dunmore, her daughters, and a great many of our friends and relations, walked all over the lawn and hill, the crowd dividing to give us passage. When we had reached the summit of the hill and, standing under the portico of the Fane I have just mentioned as sacred to my tutelary divinities, looked down on the plain below the scene was nearly allied to enchantment. The hum and buzz of such a multitude in groves but a few hours ago so solitary struck me beyond expression. I could not believe myself at Fonthill. I rubbed my eyes. I thought the whole a dream. And now that the splendid vision vanished, the woods still, the lawns deserted, I can hardly persuade myself they were ever otherways.

Adieu. I must break off to prepare for a journey to Mount Edgcumbe. Pacchierotti is of the party and Lady M. Duncan, who is more preciously fond of him than a she-bear of its suckling. We set forwards tomorrow. The weather is quite Italian and the oddity of

the expedition most truly original. Burton will not be left behind, and Mrs. P. Beckford is determined to follow. Dont forget giving my love to Sir William, let the heats be ever so great or yourself ever so relaxed and nervous. Write, if you have any regard for one who to his last hour will feel himself most affectionately yours

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

MOUNT EDGCUMBE,

Wed. Oct. 17th, 1781.

Here I am breathing the soft air of Mount Edgcumbe standing upon the brink of a Cliff overlooking the Sea and singing *Notturnos* with Pacchierotti. Innumerable Insects are humming about the Myrtles and Arbutus which hang on the steeps and are covered with blossoms.

I cannot help thinking myself in an Isle of the Atlantic Ocean—to which if we believe Pindar and his poetic Brethren the Souls of Heroes are transported. Here are the very paths I ran over two years ago—the pines against which I rested—the Bank where I stretched myself out and fell into one of my happy dreams. I have visited all my old haunts and paid my oblations at a Spring that I am certain is the result of Sylvanus. Would that you could see me bounding along the Terrace which hangs bold and free above the Ocean. You would almost apprehend I should trust myself to the Air and leap off the edge of the precipices.

We have been blessed to-day with a Sky of the purest Azure and soft breezes like those of Spring. I have been up and down and everywhere upon the Rocks. No creek, no Crevice, I believe have been left unexplored. You would delight in the picturesque fragments—the crooked pines and luxuriant shrubs amongst which I have passed my Day. Pacchierotti, as happy and enraptured as myself, does nothing but sing and thank Heaven that he has entered a Region so like his Native Italy.

CHAPTER VII

"VATHEK" (1782-83)

The history of the composition of "Vathek" : A misunderstanding or a misstatement : The Rev. Samuel Henley : Beckford conceives the idea of "Vathek," and proceeds to write it : Henley translates it : The author's appreciation of the translation : Correspondence between Beckford and Henley : Beckford decides that the original and the translation shall be published simultaneously : Henley publishes his version without permission : His weak defence of his action : Henley states in his preface that there was an Oriental original : Beckford's indignation : He publishes "Vathek" at Lausanne and Paris : The sources of "Vathek" : Some appreciations of the story : The unpublished "Episodes" of "Vathek"

ADMIRABLE as are his books of travel, Beckford has come down to posterity as the author of "Vathek," which, by a freak, he wrote in French, and so gave to the literature of France a masterpiece by an English writer—an incident unique in the annals of letters.

The history of the composition of this story, in itself, as we shall see, simple enough, has, however, been complicated by a statement made by Beckford. "I wrote 'Vathek' when I was barely twenty-two years of age," he told Cyrus Redding in 1835. "I wrote it at one sitting. It cost me three days and two nights of hard labour. I never took off my clothes the whole time. This severe application made me very ill." Nothing apparently could be clearer than this account, and it was accepted unconditionally for more than half a century: then, Beckford's correspondence with the Rev. Samuel Henley being recovered, it was shown to be entirely inaccurate. It follows, therefore, that either Cyrus Redding misunderstood

his informant, or that Beckford deceived him. Redding's reports of his conversations with Beckford, however, are so clear, and this particular statement is garnished with so much detail, that we are forced to the conclusion that the author was at fault. It is difficult to accept the suggestion made by Dr. Garnett that Beckford's memory was confused, for, notwithstanding he was speaking more than fifty years after "Vathek" was written, his mind was perfectly clear and his reminiscences of other things in days equally remote thoroughly trustworthy; but, on the other hand, it is not in keeping with the frankness of Beckford's character that he should have been posing for effect; and a possible solution is that he was speaking, not of "Vathek," but of one of the "Episodes" of "Vathek."

It was not later than the autumn of 1781 that Beckford made the acquaintance of the Rev. Samuel Henley, to whom, in connection with "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents," reference has already been made in these pages. Henley, who was born in England in 1740, had gone to America, and there had secured the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in the William and Mary College, Williamsburg, Virginia. When the War of Independence broke out, his loyalty prompted him to return to his native land, and, shortly after his arrival, he was appointed an assistant-master at Harrow School, where to his care were entrusted two lads, cousins of Beckford on his mother's side. Beckford met the tutor, and found in him a congenial companion. Henley, indeed, was a man of sound attainments and literary tastes, and a correspondent on antiquarian and classical subjects with Michael Tyson, Richard Gough, Dawson Turner, Bishop Percy, and other scholars. It was his acquaintance with Arabic and Persian, however, that especially endeared him to Beckford, who was still full of enthusiasm for the "Arabian Nights"; and probably their conversations about this work, and a chance suggestion of Henley, aroused in the younger man the train of thought that led

him to contemplate the composition of a "Suite des Contes arabes."

Beckford was fascinated by the idea, and he eagerly sought for the germ of a story.

The spirit has moved me this Eve, and shut up in my Apartment as you advised, I have given way to fancies and inspirations (he wrote to Henley on January 21, 1782). What will be the consequences of this mood I am not bold enough to determine.

This solitary communion with his ever-vivid imagination bore fruit almost at once, for eight days later he was able to tell Henley that he was at work on a story.

I suppose, my dear Sir, I am indebted to you for the capital epistle which Hamilton has written to me, and which amused me not a little, though my imagination, the eve it arrived, was wrapped in the thickest of gloom.

You are answerable for having set me to work upon a Story so horrid that I tremble whilst relating it, and have not a nerve in my frame but vibrates like an Aspen.

There will be no proceeding in our work without many long consultations,—therefore shall I trouble you with myself as soon as I can escape the plagues of London with any decorum.—Probably some time next week.

The next reference to "Vathek," still unnamed however, is in a letter to the same correspondent on April 25.

By the bye, my Arabian tales go on prodigiously, and I think Count Hamilton will smile on me when we are introduced to each other in Paradise.*

At last, in an undated letter, we read that "The Tale

* Count Hamilton is, of course, his ancestor, the author of "Le Quatres Façadins."

of Caliph Vathec goes on surprisingly.”—“Vathec,” it is called, not “Vathek”; and on ~~May 1~~, ^{undated} there is another allusion to the story :

My Caliph advances on his journey to Persepolis, alias Istakhar : but want of time I believe will force me to stop his immediate proceedings.

On May 15, Beckford left London for the Continent, and here perhaps the narrative should be broken to give some account of his wanderings. This, however, may be postponed, and the story of the composition and publication of “Vathek” continued. It is impossible to say when the story was finished, but it must have been early in 1783, for on January 13 of that year Beckford wrote to Henley, now Rector of Rendlesham, Suffolk :

I go on bravely with the Episodes of Vathec, and hope in a few weeks to wind up his adventures.

Not until November 18, however, does he again mention “Vathek,” but by this time the manuscript was in the hands of Henley, to whom he wrote from Cologny, near Geneva :

You promised to write to me. You proposed likewise to translate Vathec, which I left in your hands.

Henley, it seems, was in no hurry to set about the task he had volunteered to undertake ; and in May (1784) Beckford—for the first time giving his hero the name by which he is known—inquires, “Have you finished ‘Vathek?’” and adds, “I am far gone on another episode.” In the same month he gave Henley permission to show the manuscript to a new pupil, a young friend of the author.

Pray introduce him to Vathek, whom at present he hardly knows by name. I suppose by this time you are

deep in the Halls of Damnation, hearing the melancholy voice of Eblis in the cloud of night and catching moon-light glimpses of Nouronihar.

I long eagerly to read your translation, I feel more grateful for the pains you must have taken about it than I can express.

In October Beckford still had not seen the translation.

I spend many an hour dreaming about my unfortunate princes, and contriving reasonable ways and means of sending them to the devil (he wrote from Fonthill on October 14). What are you about now? Have you got a fair copy of your translation?

At last Henley sent a portion of the manuscript to the anxious author, who acknowledged its receipt on February 26, 1785:

Your translation has all the spirit of the Caliphes and their Dæmons—I long for the continuation, and hope you will soon gratify my curiosity.

A few weeks later Beckford received the rest of the translation, whereupon, on March 21, he wrote:

You make me proud of Vathek. The blaze just at present is so overpowering that I can see no faults, but you can depend upon my hunting diligently after them.

Pray send the continuation; I know not how it happens, but the original when first born scarce gave me so much rapture as your translation.

Were I well and in good spirits I should run wild among my rocks and forests telling stones, trees and flowers, how gloriously you have succeeded. My imagination is again on fire.

I have been giving the last trimmings to some Episodes and sown the seeds of another which I trust will bring forth fruit in good season.

I eagerly hope you will one day or other introduce those plants to our English soil. We have had a dismal winter, ground cracked, shrubs pinched, etc., the workmen

numbed; but I have gone on sinking my princes to hell with active perseverance.

Beckford, at Henley's suggestion, carefully revised the story, and on April 9 wrote to the translator that he much approved of the idea of prefacing the tale with some explanation of its costume. The following letters tell their own tale.

THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

RENDLESHAM, *April 12th, 1785.*

It is so long since I read the Arabian Nights that I do not recollect them exactly enough to refer thither for authorities, of which there no doubt are manifold, without reading them again: but this I will do as soon as I can get them. Other authorities I have collected which will throw considerable light on the costume of Vathek. I am glad you approve the plan of [an] explanatory preface. When you write next tell me what you think of the additions mentioned in my last. Surely the superiority in wickedness entitled Carathis to a different and more conspicuous punishment than the rest—perhaps Vathek's and Nouronihar's should have been also diversified. I say only *perhaps*, for upon further reflexion I am somewhat in doubt. I confess myself a friend to discriminations in every thing. The “*fortem Gyam fortemque Chloanthum*” are not much to my taste.

If you return the copy of Vathek corrected by piecemeal I can apply the spare time I have to put it in a better train.

Several happy terms have occurred which I could wish to substitute in the place of others already inserted. Surely for instance Vathek mistaking the tattered awnings and chintzes for large flowers—would be better expressed by *palampores* instead of *chintzes* &c. &c.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

April 23, 1785.

I have given my attention for several days past to Vathek, and have made several little alterations you will

not perhaps disapprove. The Arabian Nights will furnish some illustrations (particularly as to Ghouls, etc.) but much more may be learnt from Herbelot's Bib[liothèque] Orient[ale]: and Richardson's Diss[ertations]. I know not how to make the discriminations you advise. I have always thought Nouronihar too severely punished and if I knew how conveniently, would add a crime or two to her share; what say you? Let me know.

THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

I am impatient to receive the part of Vathek you have improved, for what you call little alterations I am confident I shall find deserving a better name. The Arabian Nights I expect great assistance from, but principally in illustrating manners and customs. Herbelot and Richardson I have already sifted. Several other volumes (all within my reach) I have also ransacked and with no small success; insomuch that you will be yourself surprised to find how accurate you have in most instances been.—But tell me, what must be said of *the spoons of Cocknos?—the butterflies of Cachemire?*—I cannot turn to the passage where the mention of the Bismillah occurs—but if (as I think) it is mentioned as introductory to prayers, we must discard it—for it was not used in this way till the year of the hegeira 341, whereas Vathek died a century before.—*Watering pots* are also mentioned out of place; at least, I conceive so. But of this you can give more certain information from Niebuhr in answer to Michaelis Question XLI. You recollect an illegible rhapsody you once gave me:—I enclose to you a fragment which with some alterations and additions I have worked up out of it, and which I propose introducing in a note. I say *a note*; because, I think, to exhibit Vathek *properly* in English—there should be some account given of the original and translation in a preface—then should follow a preliminary dissertation on the Fable and Machinery—and to the Story itself, should be subjoined notes to illustrate the costume: otherwise a very considerable part of its merit must be lost to 999 readers of a thousand. The information I most want, relates to the internal system of the Khalife's palace—eunuchs—cymbaling—clapping hands—and a few other such articles: most of which (if

not all) I apprehend may be found in Ricault—but, perhaps, may be better picked up incidentally from the Arabian Tales. These, with two other books; one entitled *A Miscellany of Eastern Learning*, and another *The History of Eunuchism*; I daily expect to receive.

Suppose the catastrophe of Carathis to run thus:—

" . . . and execrating the hour in which she was begotten, and the womb that had borne her, started at once into a whirl so rapid as rendered her form altogether indistinct. Thus, with every energy of her soul intensely occupied on her immediate perceptions, was she doomed to wander in eccentric revolutions, without pause or remission."

As to Nouronihar, I fear that it may be objected that she becomes too suddenly wicked. "Nemo repente fuit turpissimus."—She has, however, Fate to plead (*vide* the Vision) and an excellent instrument in Vathek to accomplish (according to the Eastern Doctrine) the (*word illegible*) decrees of fate. Some small discrimination of punishment however between her and Vathek may be easily introduced. No doubt she deserved to be damned, but Vathek deserved the heavier damnation; if therefore the Punishment of Vathek be somewhat aggravated, the end will be perhaps best answered in that way.

If Gulchenrouz be considerable enough to be mentioned at the end it should I think be first—but perhaps he had better be omitted. Nouronihar should not be overlooked in winding up the whole. These are the only vague hints that occur as I write.

RENDLESHAM, 26 April.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

Saturday, 11th June, 1785.

The Caliph Vathek is safe in my possession and had I not been engaged in the very manner you conjecture, notice would have been long since sent to Rendlesham of his arrival.

As I have several things of importance to say to you, I must beg the favour of seeing you here *immediately*, as the preparations for our journey are in great forwardness.

I surmise you can easily come in a couple of days, and I will detain you no longer than is absolutely necessary for the revival of *Vathek*, the selection of notes, and the explanation of doubtful passages.

THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

RENDLESHAM, 15th June, 1785.

I am glad to hear that no new disaster has befallen the Caliph. In defiance of Mahomet I would undertake the conduct of him from his present resting-place, hither; if it were but in my power. Morally speaking it is (and I am extremely sorry to say it) impossible for me to come to Fonthill. Such is the state of my family at present that I cannot possibly leave it. One of my children is still languishing under one of the thousand evils that children have to contend with, and God knows how the conflict will end; at the same time my poor wife in consequence of a violent rheumatic fever occasioned by her attention to the little ones has entirely lost the use of her neck, one arm and hand, without being able to assist herself with the other. The complaint is so inveterate as to give no present hopes of a speedy removal, and a considerable aggravation of this evil is that she has not a friend nor a neighbour in the whole county to be with her. Indeed, as to all the advantages and comforts of society one had better be amongst the bears in Russia, or the Ouranoutangs of Africa, than in this part of Suffolk. You see how I am circumstanced, and therefore will consider my declining the journey to F[onthill] as a hard necessity against which I have no remedy.

With respect to *Vathek* whatever directions you have to give I will certainly observe. You shall neither complain of my wanting moderation nor patience. But, were I with you, unless I had my books also, it would be of but little avail as to the notes, because they can at present only be found by references to my own books, as I have not hitherto had time to transcribe them.

Your usual place of embarkation is Margate if I mistake not. Should you come for shipping however to Harwich instead, the distance from hence is very inconsiderable and in one day we could settle the whole.

In Vathek, abt page 38 or near it of my translation there is an evening scene in which I have endeavoured to throw a little more color than as it stands there at present by putting it something in this way:—

The sultry heat had subsided, the sky became serene, the air refreshing, and the flowers began to breathe their evening odours. The beams of the setting sun just breaking from the last cloud of the west lighted up the green bulges of the mountain with a golden verdure, and cast a ruddy glow over the sheep that grotesquely varied their sidelong shadows as they gambolled down its steep. No sounds were audible &c.

Could you favor me with a sight of the Episodes to Vathek or any other of the Tales.

THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

Sunday, 19th June, 1785.

I have this instant received your letter and suppose that by this time mine in answer to your last has reached you. Had it not been for Mrs. Henley's illness I should been set out for Fonthill before the arrival of yours and of course, [I am] much mortified at not meeting you. I am sorry to say that her complaint is rather worse than better.

The notes I have selected are curious and to the purpose, taken from Eastern writers, or writers and travellers who have described eastern manners, countries &c. Though they be not so numerous as to overwhelm the text, they have nevertheless cost me a good deal of reading to pick up. In their way I think you will allow them to be *merum sal*. Excepting the Isle of Kirmith (is it not the Island of Kirmuah?), Talapoin, and Monker and Nekir I do not recollect any illustrations that I need. Having mended the translation itself in a variety of places, I want much to receive your corrections that I may put the whole together in a way to enable you to judge of it as a whole. If you should not return to Fonthill and have not the copy with you in town, will you be so good as to send it before you embark, and with it the episodes of Vathek or any other tales you can spare.

If it suited you to embark from Harwich as well as Margate the distance of that place is not so great as to prevent our meeting.

The MS. if committed to the care of Mr. Wildman might be forwarded to me (by Hamilton's Woodbridge coach which sets out every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning from the Spread Eagle in Gracechurch Street) directed to be left for me at Mr. Page's, Surgeon in Woodbridge.

I forgot to mention that I have been unable to procure the Persian Tales. Whether they be out of print or not I cannot tell, but I have applied repeatedly for them without success.

If you have a copy in town, cannot you send them with Vathek?

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

Friday eve : June 22nd [1785].

. . . To-morrow I shall be in Guildford, the next day at Canterbury, Monday I hope to embark, . . . and I would send the Episodes, but have not a second copy. Vathek I have delivered to the care of Mr. Thornton, who lived with Robson, and has now set up for himself in Southampton Street.

Leave the description of the Eve: scene as it was originally—we have already more description than we know what to do with. If it were possible to see you at Dover I'd rejoice.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

CHÂTEAU DE LA TOUR,
près de VEYVAY-EN-SEINE.
9th Feb., 1786.

The publication of Vathek must be suspended at least another year. I would not have him on any account precede the French edition. . . . The Episodes to Vathek are nearly finished, and the whole thing will be completed in eleven to twelve months. You must be sensible that, notwithstanding my eagerness to see Vathek in print, I cannot sacrifice the French edition to my impatience. The anticipation of so principal a tale as that of the Caliph

would be tearing the proudest feather from my turban. I must repeat, therefore, my desire that you will not give your translation to the world till the original has made its appearance, and we have touched more on the subject. You may imagine how I long for the moment of enjoying your notes and the preliminary dissertation, which I doubt not will be received with the honours due to so valuable a morsel of Orientalism.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

April 13th, 1786.

Upon my word, you pay Vathek much more attention than he deserves, and do you not think we shall usher him too pompously into the world with a dissection of his soul and machinery? Notes are certainly necessary, and the diss[ertation] I myself should very much approve but fear the world might imagine I fancied myself the Author, not of an Arabian Tale, but an Epic Poem. Supposing you finish your preface and preliminary discourse, I make no doubt your good taste will suggest to you a light and easy style, that *Misses* so may not be scared, for after all, a poor Arabian storyteller can only pretend to say, "*Virginibus Puerisque canto.*"

As for the Rhapsody, it deserves to be pushed, not only into the margin of the book, but quite out of it. Tho' you have given it your privileged touches, it still limps to excite compassion and as for instruction, don't fancy it conveys any. The River Katismir never flowed but in my brain, the nine pillars are entirely of my creation, etc., etc. After this confession you will not seriously wish, I should think, to insert the poetical whirl to *Ithelminar*.

I believe in most respects I have been exact in my costume.

The Domes of Shaddukian and Amberabad you will find explained in Richardson.

The Cocknos is a bird whose bill is much esteemed in Persia for its beautiful polish, and sometimes used as a spoon; see *Persian Tales*, Hist: of the Sorrowful Vizir, and Zulica Begum.

The butterflies of Cachemire are celebrated in a poem of Memphis I slaved at with Zemir, the old Mahommedan,

who assisted me in translating W. Montague's MSS. But they are hardly worth a note.

I suppose you will prepare a tolerably long note on the Simurgh. That respectable bird deserves all you can say of her. Soliman Raad, Soliman Daki (not Dawmins, for God's sake) and Soliman surnamed Gian-ben-Gian will furnish ample scope for a display of oriental conditions. The Miscell : of Elenig and the History of Babbaloukism may possibly help to enlighten your researches.

The catastrophe of Carathis had better remain as you first intended. I am perfectly at a loss how to deepen Vathek's damnation, and as for the end where mention is made of Gul, be assured we cannot improve it. The period runs admirably, and for my part I think the contrast between the boisterous Caliph and the peacable Gul not ill imagined.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

August 1st, 1786.

I thank you for your letter of the 12th June, and the sentiments so feelingly expressed in it. My spirits and rest are broken, and it is with difficulty I hold my pen. The slow fever which has been preying upon me almost without interruption since the latter end of May, has most disagreeably diverted my attention from Vathek, but upon reading over your letter, it appears you had sent the MSS. for my inspection. If you have, Heaven knows its fate; certainly it has not reached my hands any more than a letter to which you allude as immediately preceding your last. I beg you will clear up these doubts, being anxious to receive your notes and illustrations. I fear the dejection of mind into which I am plunged will prevent my finishing the other stories, and of course Vathek's making his appearance in any language . . . this winter. I would not have him upon any account come forth without his companions.

Indorse your answer to Mr. Foxhall, No. 19, Cavendish St., Cav : Sq : and he will forward it to me without delay.

The dejection of mind from which Beckford was suffering was the result of the untimely death of his wife,

which had taken place abroad at the end of May; a lesser but sufficient blow followed close upon the heels of this tragedy. In the summer of 1786, without giving any intimation to the author, Henley published his translation of “Vathek,” with the notes, but without the preliminary dissertation. It can only be supposed that he was led to commit this breach of faith by the desire that his labours should not be wasted. Beckford had forbidden publication until the Episodes were ready, but he had been engaged upon his story for five years and it was not yet finished. Henley may well have thought that perhaps Beckford might abandon the completion of his task, and that if he waited for permission, he might never be able to issue his version. This may serve as an explanation of his action, but it cannot be accepted as an excuse; indeed how poor a case Henley had may be judged from the defence he made in the following letter (now printed for the first time) written to the solicitor in whose hands Beckford placed the matter.

THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY to THOS. WILDMAN

RENDLESHAM, near MELTON & IPSWICH,
23 Oct., 1786.

SIR,

I should have returned an immediate answer to your letter, but it came in my absence from home, whilst I was attending a sick friend who is now no more.

You begin your letter with a charge in the name of Mr. Beckford, which is a little extraordinary both as to the manner in which it is expressed and also as to its substance—it is that the copy of Vathek was entrusted to me for the purpose of translating it *only*. If anything (as I cannot but suspect) was meant to be implied by the word *entrusted*, more than simply *put into my hands*, I must declare myself sorry that a person of your liberality should descend upon such an occasion to the application of it, and must at the same time take the liberty to add that, I am as little used to the abuse of any trust as either Mr. Beckford or yourself.

Upon second thoughts, however, I must acquit you of intending the apparent insinuation, because what you have immediately added leaves the offensive expression to be considered only as an inadvertent one:—for you say that Mr. Beckford's not knowing how to account for the publication of my translation, arises from his having written to me *to delay it*. Now, why should he write to delay a publication which was never designed?—If Mr. B. will give himself the trouble to reflect, he must remember that I was in possession of the transcript of *Vathek* a considerable time before I ever thought of translating it, and therefore that the original could not have been *entrusted* to me for the purpose of translating it *only*. He will also remember that I undertook the translation at his desire, and for the sole purpose of publication; and further, that he solicited me to go on, with the same view, thro' the other tales to which "*Vathek*" belongs. He cannot forget that after I had communicated the first specimen to him, he gave me no respite till the whole was finished—that he expressed the highest commendation of what I had done, and not only supervised and corrected my manuscript, but retained the variations and additions I had made. That the transcript might be benefited by his review, I have his own assurance that he delayed his departure from England on account of it; and since his residence at Lausanne I can show his communications of reference for the sake of my notes. In consideration of a late unhappy occurrence it was my own wish to have intirely suppressed the work, but as I had been employed upon it prior to that event, and was known to be so by some of my friends, I could not decline it without favouring a charge that I was unwilling to countenance, and therefore sacrificed my own inclination to what I considered as a positive engagement to Mr. Beckford—not however without a precaution in the preface which, if the reviews of publick prints may be trusted, failed not to answer its aim. Before my papers went to press I wrote to apprize Mr. B. of it, and as soon as the volume was printed I forwarded to him a large paper copy. In so doing I considered myself as gratifying him in the highest degree.

It appeared, however, some time after that Mr. Beckford had changed his mind with respect to the *separate* appearance of *Vathek*, and that he wished my work to be delayed

till the whole series of tales could come forth together, but his letter intimating this did not pass the London office till the 18th of August, which was three weeks after my book was published. In this letter, which was an answer to one of mine of the 12th of June, Mr. B. tells me that a former letter to which I had then referred him, had not found its way. Whether any mistake or confusion has arisen upon that account I cannot say, but thus much I will venture to affirm that my publication will in no respect detract from Mr. Beckford's reputation, and further that it will rather have a contrary effect. Mr. B's last letter I should have answered before, but it was mislaid soon after the receipt of it, and not found till a thorough rummage had been made for it today.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servt,

S. HENLEY.

Mr. Beckford cannot have forgotten that his desiring me to undertake the translation of *Vathek* was occasioned by its not having been translated to his wishes by the Gentleman in whose hands it was put for the purpose.

To make matters worse Henley prefaced his translation with the following note :

The Original of the following Story, together with some others of a similar kind, collected in the East by a Man of Letters, was communicated to the Editor above three years ago. The pleasure he received from the perusal of it, induced him at that time to transcribe and since to translate it. How far the copy may be a just representation, it becomes not him to determine. He presumes, however, to hope that, if the difficulty of accommodating our English idioms to the Arabick, preserving the correspondent tones of a diversified narrative, and discriminating the nicer touches of character through the shades of foreign manners, be duly considered ; a failure in some points, will not preclude him from all claim to indulgence : especially, if those images, sentiments, and passions, which, being independent of local

peculiarities, may be expressed in every language, shall be found to retain their native energy in our own.

The story was published anonymously, but Stephen Weston in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (January 1787) attributed the authorship to Henley : “ ‘ Vathek,’ it would seem,” he said, “ has been composed as a text for the purpose of giving to the publick the information contained in the notes.” Henley, however, contrived to turn the tables upon his critic. “ The supposition of Mr. W. in your last Magazine,” he replied, in the February issue of the periodical, “ augurs but ill, at setting out, of his conjectural skill ; it being certain that the said History is, as the preface declares, a translation of an unpublished manuscript. . . . But, though this supposition be erroneous, there are three positions in it, which, as coming from so respectable a scholar, are highly flattering to the Translator. The first is, that Mr. W., judging from the *notes*, thinks the writing of them equal to the composition of the *text*. The second, that, since the translation hath passed with Mr. W. for an original, it must have some pretension to favour. And the third, that the notes are more apposite to the text than might have been looked for, but on the presumption that the text was built upon them.”

This was pretty fencing, but imagine Beckford's indignation when he read in Henley's preface that the story was translated from the Arabic : this statement was in his eyes, naturally enough, a more grave offence than the unlicensed publication. He did the only thing in his power to vindicate his authorship ; he forthwith published his story in the original French, both in Paris and Lausanne, the latter edition containing the following reply to Henley's preface :—

L'ouvrage que nous présentons au public a été composé en François, par M. Beckford. L'indiscrétion d'un homme de lettres à qui le manuscrit avoit été confié, il y

a trois ans, en a fait connoître la traduction angloise avant la publication de l'original. Le Traducteur a même pris sur lui d'avancer, dan sa Préface, que Vathek étoit traduit de l'Arabe. L'Auteur s'inscrit en faux contre cette assertion, et s'engage à ne point en imposer au public sur d'autres ouvrages de ce genre qu'il se propose de faire connoître ; il les puisera dans la collection précieuse de manuscrits orientaux laissés par feu M. Worthley Montague, et dont les originaux se trouvent à Londres chez M. Palmer, Régisseur du Duc de Bedford.

Which of the editions of 1787, that published at Lausanne or that published at Paris, was the first to appear has long been a bibliographical puzzle. The Lausanne edition, seen through the press by M. Chavannes, is probably, indeed almost certainly, entitled to priority, for the text is evidently that translated by Henley. Yet when copies of this edition were sent to France, they were confiscated by the customs. “They could not have been seized as contraband if the French edition had not existed,” wrote Dr. Garnett in his introduction to “Vathek” (London, 1891) ; “it is, nevertheless, possible that, although protected by royal privilege, it had not actually left the press. The privilege bears date August 22, and the registration September 4.” May it not be, however, that the licence to print may have carried with it protection until a reasonable time had elapsed during which the manuscript could be set up, printed, and published ? If this was so, the problem is solved, for the document containing the “Approbation du Censeur Royal” bears the date January 26, 1787. The delay in the publication of the Paris edition is explained by the fact that Beckford carefully revised the story, and omitting the Glossary appended to the Lausanne edition, printed in its place a number of Henley's notes, probably translated into French by himself.*

* For particulars of subsequent editions in French and English see the Bibliography appended to this work.

Though the form in which "Vathek" is cast was inspired by "The Arabian Nights," it is by no means an imitation of these Oriental tales: indeed, the author is less indebted to them than to the satirical romance of Voltaire—"Voltaire," says Mallarmé, "imité . . . un prose, qui plus souvent annonce Chateaubriand, peut honorer aussi cet autre nom, Beckford." In the main, however, "Vathek" is original. "You could scarcely find anything like the Hall of Eblis in the Eastern writings, for that was my own," Beckford told Cyrus Redding. "Old Fonthill had a very ample, lofty, loud-echoing hall, one of the largest in the kingdom. Numerous doors led from it into the various parts of the house, through dim, winding passages. It was from that I introduced the hall—the idea of the Hall of Eblis being generated from my own. My imagination magnified and coloured it with the Eastern character."

I was of full age when I first committed "Vathek" to paper (Beckford wrote to Clark about 1832), and the scenes which preceded and followed the magnificent celebration of my one-and-twentieth birthday—the Egyptian halls and vaulted chambers of Fonthill, people with the prototypes of Gulchenrouz and Nouronihar solely visible for the consecutive days and nights by the glow of lamps and fires—suggested my first ideas of the Palace of Eblis.

The author gives the further information that all the females in the book were portraits of those in the domestic establishment of old Fonthill, "their fancied good or ill qualities exaggerated to suit my purpose; but," he added, referring alike to characters and descriptions of scenery, "I had to elevate, exaggerate, and orientalise everything. I was soaring on the Arabian bird roc, among genii and enchantments, not moving among men."

"Vathek" has a curious combination of qualities, ranging from the fantastic scenes at the beginning in which the Indian figures, to the epic sublimity of the

account of the Hall of Eblis, and the concluding catastrophe: there is mockery and grandeur, voluptuousness and wit, cynicism and romance. Could anything be more delightfully extravagant than some of the descriptions of the Caliph?

His figure was pleasing and majestic; but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired. For fear, however, of depopulating his dominions, and making his palace desolate, he but rarely gave way to his anger. . . .

He wished to know everything; even sciences that did not exist. He was fond of engaging in disputes with the learned, but did not allow them to push their opposition with warmth. He stopped with presents the mouths of those whose mouths could be stopped; whilst others whom his liberality was unable to subdue, he sent to prison to cool their blood, a remedy that often succeeded.

Addison and Johnson had chosen to cast stories in Eastern form, but Beckford entirely eclipsed their efforts, and "Vathek" stands alone, supreme, as the only tale with the true Oriental glamour fashioned by an Englishman. Said Byron, who, like Southey, did not scruple to borrow from its imagery: "For correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination, it far surpasses all European imitations; and bears such marks of originality, that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation . . . [it is] a work which I never recur to, or read, without a renewal of gratification." Not less enthusiastic is the tribute of Stéphane Mallarmé: "Tout coule de source, avec une limpidité vive, avec un ondolement large de périodes; et l'éclat tend à se fondre dans la pureté totale du cours, qui charrie maintes richesses de diction inaperçues d'abord: cas naturel avec un étranger

inquiet que quelque expression trop audacieuse ne le trahisse en arrêtant le regard." Certainly the wondrous imagination that inspired "Vathek," and the magnificent language in which it is clothed, assure it a permanent place among the masterpieces of English literature.

The Episodes, narrated in the Hall of Eblis, to which reference is made in the correspondence with Henley, were to have been four in number, but one was abandoned. In the Lausanne edition (p. 197) we read, "Le quatrième prince en étoit au milieu de son récit, quand il fut interrompu"; in the Paris edition of the same year (p. 160), "Le quatrième prince" is altered to "Le troisième prince."

Curiously enough, the Episodes have never been printed, though there is a hint of possible publication in the London edition of "Vathek" (printed in French) of 1815, when we read in the Preface :

J'ai préparé quelques Episodes ; ils sont indiqués, à la page 200, comme faisant suite à Vathek—peut-être paroîtront-ils un jour.

Turning to the page indicated we find some lines not contained in any earlier version of the story :

Le Calife et Nouronihar consentirent à cette proposition, et Vathek prenant la parole, leur fit, non sans gémir, un sincère récit de tout ce qui lui étoit arrivé. Lorsqu'il eut fini sa pénible narration, le jeune homme qui avait parlé, commença la sienne de la manière suivante.

Histoire des deux Princes amis, Alasi et Firouz, enfermés dans le palais du feu souterrain.

Histoire du Prince Barkiarokh enfermé dans le palais du feu souterrain.

Histoire du Prince Kalilah et de la Princesse Zulkais, enfermés dans le palais du feu souterrain.

Le troisième Prince en étoit au milieu de son récit, quand il fut interrompu, etc.

The reason why the Episodes did not appear at the same time as “Vathek,” as was the author’s intention, is probably that they were not quite ready when he hurriedly published that story at Lausanne and Paris as a reply to the remark in Henley’s preface to the translation, that the work was of Eastern origin. Immediately on its appearance “Vathek” secured for Beckford so great a reputation that he may well have hesitated subsequently to print anything of the same kind, for, though Rogers says “Beckford has no wish to obtain literary reputation; he despised it,” this was far from being the case: there can be no doubt that Beckford was very proud of his laurels. Certainly he never entirely gave up the idea of publishing the Episodes, and in the last decade of his long life, was willing to let Bentley have them, nay, even eager that he should have them—at a price. “I will not let the manuscripts go under £1000,” he said to Cyrus Redding in 1838, when the latter urged him to publish them while he could still read the proofs; “I will not let my writings go for nothing.”*

Beckford was proud of these Episodes, and delighted to read them to any man of letters. Rogers heard two of them, and thought them “extremely fine.”

“He read me his travels in Portugal, and the stories related in that small chamber in the Palace of Eblis (Rogers wrote to Byron on February 8, 1818). The last were full of unimaginable horrors, but of those delectable personages, of Zulkais and Kalilah—more when we meet.†

Byron, however, was not content to wait to hear more

* The Episodes will shortly be published in an English translation by Sir Frank T. Marzials, C.B.

† Moore: “Life and Works of Byron,” vol. iv. p. 207.

until he should meet Rogers, and he wrote in reply from Venice, on March 3 :

Your account of your visit to Fonthill is very striking: could you beg of *him* for *me* a copy in MS. of the remaining *Tales*? I think I deserve them, as a strenuous and public admirer of the first one. I will return it when read, and make no ill-use of the copy, if granted. Murray would send out anything safely. If ever I return to England, I should very much like to see the author, with his permission. In the meantime you could not oblige me more than by obtaining me the perusal I request, in French or English—all's one for that, though I prefer Italian to either. I have a French copy of "*Vathek*," which I bought at Lausanne. I can read French with great pleasure and facility, though I neither write nor speak it.*

Rogers dutifully conveyed Byron's wish to Beckford, who could not bring himself to lend his manuscript.

Your commission with regard to certain unimaginable fancies in the shape of an Eastern Tale, the Loves of Kalilah and Zulkais, I executed most faithfully—would I could say successfully (he wrote to Byron on November 23, 1820); he hesitated, half consented, and concluded with saying that he hoped they would induce you to venture within the walls of his Abbey—the place of their birth, and from which they had never wandered.†

Byron never read the stories, nor did he ever go to Fonthill, though he wrote to Beckford to suggest a meeting—a proposal that the older man declined. "Oh! to what good could it possibly have led," he said. "We should have met in full drill—both talked at the same time—both endeavoured to have been delighted—a correspondence would have been established, the most insufferable and laborious that can be imagined, because the most

* Moore: "*Life of Byron*," (ed. 1844), p. 376.

† Byron: "*Letters*" (ed. Prothero), vol. v. p. 138.

artificial. Oh, gracious goodness, I have had the opportunity of enjoying the best qualities of his mind in his works; what more do I require?" Then he added, "Byron is a splendid bouquet of intellectual voluptuousness—a genius—a great genius—but an irregular one, his poetic flight is like that of a fire-fly, alternate flashes of light and dark."

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE (1783-86)

Beckford decides to go abroad again : His pleasure at leaving England : Letter to Lady Hamilton on the eve of his departure : Travels *en prince* : His retinue : Lettice, Errhert, Burton, Cozens : Letters : Returns to England in the spring of 1783 : His marriage : Spends his honeymoon on the Continent : Letters : In Switzerland : The death of his wife : His grief

It is now necessary to return to the time when Beckford early in 1782 decided to go abroad again. In the days of his youth he could find no attraction in England, nor, the lust of building not having yet stirred in him, was he interested in his estate; and though when he was in London he attended the entertainments of the great, this was from a sense of duty; and it was with a keen sense of satisfaction that he left his native country.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

LONDON, *March 26th*, 1782.

MY DEAR LADY HAMILTON,

This vile Country grows so outrageously turbulent that if I stay three Months longer within its precincts I shall give up the Ghost. Not having health or strength enough to be heroical, I am determined to breathe peaceably next Summer at Naples and I must fervently hope before June is elapsed you will see me arrive. Don't talk *pompously* or *angrily*, for the sake of Heaven. I really am not able to blaze at present in the political Hemisphere. Twelve months of leisure and tranquillity may prepare me for as many years of Torment and Illustration. I wish for some snug Casino or other amongst the Cliffs of Posilippo

where I may deposit Mr. Lettice, Cozens' first born (a painter I bring with me) and that eccentric Animal Burton. As for myself, you promised me a corner at Portici into which I shall joyfully creep. Tho' I cough and am half dead at this moment, the thoughts of seeing you and Sir Wm. once more under the blue Aether of Italy gives me spirits to sing and dance like a wild Thing. I shall bring ample stores of Musick and a Painter worthy to imitate the Scenery of the Gardens of the Hesperides. Don't you think they still exist somewhere or other in Calabria? Now, thank God, I may live in hopes of exploring the romantic spots Sir Wm. has described to me and even perhaps of penetrating the woody region of Mongibello. You will receive me with greater satisfaction I am certain when I tell you my Mother entirely approves my schemes and thinks I cannot chuse a better moment of absenting myself from England. This poor Land, alas, is devoured by human Locusts and we may expect every other Egyptian plague if Pharoah's heart continues hardened. Pray tell that odd Being Tierney, or whatever his name is, that I think to revisit Naples; and, as soon as you read this, lose no time to write that I may receive your commands and bring anything *bringable* from England—adieu, my dear Lady H. Give my love to Sir Wm. and if he is pleased at the thoughts of seeing me don't let me set forth without the comfort of knowing it. The French live upon Islands this Spring and threaten to suck up every Sugar Cane in Jamaica. T'other Night, spite of national gloom, there was a most dazzling *Fête* at Devonshire House. I was bespangled like the rest of the World and whisked about amongst garlands, Lustres and simpering faces till six in the morning. Once more adieu, and once more let me beg of you to write immediately.

Early in May Beckford left London for Ostend, *en route* for Italy. On the two previous tours he had been accompanied only by Dr. Lettice; but this time, being now the uncontrolled master of an enormous fortune, he took with him a large suite. His old tutor came with him again, and, besides Errhert, a physician, and Burton, a musician, he had in his train John Robert Cozens, a

landscape painter in water-colours, who sketched the scenes that attracted his employer. Beckford's *entourage* filled three carriages, which were preceded by outriders and followed by servants with reserves of horses; it may have given him some satisfaction that, travelling so thoroughly *en prince*, he was at Augsburg mistaken for the Emperor of Austria, who was known to be contemplating about that time a visit *incognito* to Rome.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

BRUSSELS, May 19th, 1782.

MY DEAR LOUISA,

After tossing and tumbling on the Sea, grunting and turning up the nose at Ostend, squashing and splashing thro' Meadows and Morasses, here am I at length pretty peaceably at Brussels. Like the Sky, I am neither wholly in Clouds nor in Sunshine. My Spirits, like the weather, are far from settled, but seem on the verge of clearing up. How briskly would they flow, could I sooth myself with the hope of seeing you at Naples. Lose not the view of that beloved Scheme: it may succeed if you persevere and lay aside your Lambishness. You will add many months, perhaps years, to my Life by seeing my lovely Sovereign and filling her head with recollections of our happy hours at Fonthill. Tomorrow I set forwards again and shall proceed without stopping till we reach the wild rocks of the Tirol. I shall, I dare say, enjoy many a deep reverie amongst their solitudes in which you will seem to descend the Forests of Pine which cover the Mountains. Adieu, my Love, how does your picture thrive?—give me an Account of its progress. You will, of course, let me know if you see that noodle and what she says in all the confidence of silliness. If you hear anything of me that is at all *Characteristic* be sure to let it be mentioned.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

AUGSBURG, June 2nd, 1782.

I keep wandering on like a restless Spirit and only wish some powerful Sorcerer would lay me in the red Sea.

I cannot forget my poor little Wm. I cannot banish from my thoughts those happy hours we past last Christmas at Fonthill. That Night in particular haunts my imagination when we arrived from Salisbury and seemed transported to a warm illuminated palace raised by Spells in some lonely Wilderness. Don't you remember the soft tints that coloured the Thames the preceding Evening? Alas, I cannot chase one circumstance however trifling, from my memory. Thank Heaven, you were with me; your image is now connected with the happiest recollections which rise in my mind. Here am I once more in my old apartment, calling up the long series of events which have taken place since last I saw it. You may guess what figure appears predominant. . . . I am very weak and tired with my Journey—How shall I support the heats of Italy? Your Son is well and grows every day in my esteem. Burton falls into delightful reveries upon the Harpsichord, but often touches certain chords which bring all Fonthill before my Eyes and make me run wild about the Chamber. The Weather is gloomy and every Mountain still crowned with snow. . . . I long to hear from you and to enjoy Sunshine. . . . My Langour is such that I can write no more. . . . My dear Friend, adieu.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

AUGSBURG, *June 2nd, 1782.*

Thus far I am advanced in my progress to your romantic Bay; the roads are almost impassable, and the Weather has set itself against me, but I have proceeded with resolution and expect to see St. Peter's the twenty ninth at farthest. The first days of July will bring me I flatter myself to Naples where I shall deposit Mr. Lettice, Mr. Burton, and Mr. Cozens. Perhaps you will allow me to ramble about your thickets and creep into a corner of one of your Apartments at Portici. How happy I feel with the idea of seeing you once more my dear Lady Hamilton, and with the hopes of enjoying many a serene sunset in your company. For these Months past I have been anxiously waiting to hear from you, and forming, according to custom, the most alarming conjectures; but if I am doomed to tell you what I have felt I shall

soon forget my sufferings. My God, if anything was to happen to you or if you were to have left Naples, what a melancholy void, it would appear in my eyes!

Why have you not written to me? Are you ignorant of the value I set upon your friendship? Let me entreat you to send a Letter to Rome as soon as you receive this wretched scrawl which I have hardly spirits to put together;—for, to confess the truth, I am still very languid, tho' *perfectly freed* from *Illusions*.—I bring you an ample treasure of musick and many a strange Arabian tale which I sooth myself with the idea of reading to you under my favorite Cliffs of Posilippo—what is become of poor innocent *Milk** whose quiet life I mean to imitate? and where is the formidable *Hurlo-Thrumbo*, alias Rosamouski, whom I am far from proposing as an example? Say everything kind for me to Sir Wm. Once more let me implore you to write to Rome and again let me assure you how sincerely I remain,

Your most affectionate and obliged

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

VERONA, June 10th, 1782.

I am just escaped from the Mountains and begin to dissolve in the warm sun of Verona. Notwithstanding the heat I could not help hastening to the Arena and viewing the Towers, rocks, and Cypress, which rise in every quarter.

To-morrow I hope to reach Padua and faithfully intend worshipping none but St. Anthony. The pagan Idol is immured at Brescia, so don't be alarmed. I am thinner and lighter than ever, and perhaps the winds may whisk me away as I coast the Adriatic towards Rimini. If they do not, I shall fall down the 29th before the Shrine of St. Peter. There is not a Saint in the Calendar that I do not supplicate in expectation of hearing from you. Be propitious, my dear Lady Hamilton, and let me find a Letter at Rome. If you give leave—I shall run to you immediately upon my arrival, whether at Naples or Portici; if at the last mentioned place your kindness will suffer me perhaps to pitch my Bed in one of your apart-

* A favourite spaniel,

ments. No words can express how anxiously I long to see you and to repeat again and again what an impression your goodness has made upon me. Burton, in violent spirits at the thoughts of Posilippo, is, if possible, more eccentric and original than ever. Pray give my love to Sir Wm.—pray write to me at Rome—and pray believe me,

Sincerely and affy.

Yours

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

PADUA, *Thursday, June 13th, 1782.*

It is from the Land of Senegal, I believe, that I send my Letter. The Sun is fiercer than you can conceive and the Sky without a Cloud. All Padua are celebrating the festival of their blessed St. Anthony, whose vast Church indeed is the only place that can cool a parched-up traveller. I have been sitting in a solemn *Aisle* the whole morning, listening to the Choir and viewing the distant crowd prostrate before the high Altar round which a multitude of tapers [is] kept continually moving. Not seeing the Priest who bore them, they seemed like floating exhalations. Affected by the plaintive tones of the Voices and Instruments I grew very devout and melancholy, sometimes lifting up my Eyes to the Shrine; but oftener fixing them on the pavement. St. Anthony reposes under a beautiful Arcade of the richest marble crowded with sculptures that would not have disgraced an Athenian temple and gleaming with polished friezes and *bas reliefs* of gold.

From the Arches of this holy place, depend several hundred silver lamps whose flames are never suffered to decay. The confusion of Lights, of votive tablets, of steps, of Candelabra and pillars form altogether an Appearance not unlike those wildly magnificent fabrics I sometimes visit in my Dreams.

June 18th.

I have just received a packet from England, but no Letters from you. Has the Hill fallen upon your Head or has Hamilton scratched your Eyes out? I long to be told how we go on. . . . I am far advanced in a strange Letter for the conclusion; nay, it would have been finished

had not the remainder of my Arabian MS. arrived from old Lamir.

To-morrow I proceed to Rome, in defiance of the Sun and the *Sirocco* ; in a fortnight I hope to expatiate on the cool shores of *Parthenope* and be *sirenized* every evening. Let me hear from you very often and don't forget

Your siny. aff.

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

PADUA, June 13, 1782.

Very probably half my Letters will miscarry ; if they all arrive you will certainly be tired of hearing from me and think if I am such a plague at a distance what must I become when near. The Heat makes me very languid and I pass hour after hour on the cool marble steps of St. Anthony's Shrine. The musick of the Choir throws me into delightful reveries and with eyes half closed I see white figures moving about with censers, and lamps that twinkle in the dark recesses of the Aisles. What will become of me in my journey to Rome ?—I shall certainly be almost extinguished ; but you seem to beckon me at the end of the perspective ; and, if I can but persuade myself this is no illusion, I shall surmount every obstacle with cheerfulness. I will not doubt I shall hear from you upon my arrival at Rome and even perhaps receive permission to encamp at Portici. We have here a tolerable Opera composed by Sarti—Crescentini the first Singer, a slender Creature of eighteen, seems to possess a great deal of feeling ; but the accents of Pacchierotti still vibrate in my ears and prevent their attending much to any others. I passed Yesterday Eve very agreeably amongst the arbours and Labyrinths of Quirini ; whom you saw not long ago at Naples, and who sings continually to the praise and glory of Sir Wm. I am expiring with sunshine and would give ten Arabian tales to stretch myself on the damp floor of some watery grotto. To-morrow I shall dip in the Adriatic ; for this Eve. we are going to Venice that Cozens may sketch some of my favorite Isles with their morisco Towers and waving Cypress. Adieu. If you are as happy in the thoughts of seeing me as I am

in the hopes of approaching you, few Animals will esteem themselves more fortunate than

your affect.

W. B.

The 27th I hope to reach Rome, the 2nd or 3rd of July Naples. Pray let me know where you shall be that the moment I arrive may carry me to you. They say Gagliani is uncovering at Pompeii. O 'tis a little round-about gluttonizing, swinish Animal! . . . that were I an Ogre should be cut up into griskins, tho' not for my own table. I had rather be poor *Milk* with Macaroni and ignorance than Gagliani with Science and Sausages. Pray give my kind love to Sir Wm.

Wednesday, June 19th, 1782.

PADUA.

The Morn was delightful and St. Anthony's bells in full chime. A Shadow which had fallen in the Night rendered the Air so fresh and fragrant that Mad. de R. and myself determined to sieze the opportunity and go to Miribello, a Country House which Alzarotti had inhabited, situated amongst the Euganean Hills eight or nine Miles from Padua. Our road lay between poplar alleys and fields of yellow corn—o'er hung by garlands of vine most beautifully green. I soon found myself in the midst of my favourite Hills, upon slopes covered with clover and shaded by Cherry Trees—Bending down their boughs—I gathered the fruit and grew cooler and cooler, and happier and happier every instant. We dined very comfortably in a strange Hall where I pitched my pianoforte and sung the voluptuous airs of Bertoni's Armida. That Enchantress might have raised her Palace in this situation; and, had I been Prinaldo, I certainly should not very soon have abandoned it. After Dinner we drank Coffee under some branching Lemons which spring from a Terrace commanding a boundless Scene of Towers and Villas—tall Cypress and shrubby hillocks rising like Islands out of a Sea of Corn and Vine. Evening drawing on and the breeze blowing cool from the distant Adriatic, I reclin'd on a slope and turned my eyes anxiously towards Venice, then on some little field where they were making Hay hemmed in by Chesnuts in blossom, and then to a Mountain crowned by a circular grove of Fir and Cypress. In

the centre of those shades some Monks have a comfortable nest, a perennial Spring, a garden of delicious vegetables . . . and a thousand luxuries besides, I dare say, which the poor Mortals below never dream of. If it had not been late I should certainly have climbed up to the grove and asked admittance into its recesses ; but having no mind to pass the Night in the Eyrie I contented myself with beholding it at a distance.

June 20th.

As soon as I had breakfasted I hastened into the cool Sanctuary of St. Anthony and knelt according to custom before his Shrine.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ARCHIBALD HAMILTON

Rome, June 29th, 1782.

MY DEAR ARCHY,

If you love sleep as dearly as Hamilton says you do, keep away from Rome ; for here is such a whizzing of Rockets, such a thundering of Cannon, and such a prating of prelates and Cardinals, that I am half distracted. At this very moment two or three Monsignori Abbés, as round and as gossiping as our good Friend Lady M. H., are pouring fine long Compliments down my ears, so that I hardly know what I am about and write all a one side and up and down like Hampstead and Highgate and blot my paper and black my thumbs. My dear little Archy, if you know a Witch, borrow her Besom, mount it and be at the Firework this Evening ; but be sure get back again into your nest—it is much more comfortable than Rome with all its Fountains and Amphitheatres. Your Letter I have just received, and it is just like yourself, short and entertaining. I hope you will grow taller and your Letters in proportion ; but if you was no higher than Thomas Thumb I should love and esteem you. Goodnight, you will certainly sleep better than,

Your Sin. Friend and affect.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LORD PAGET

Rome, June 29th, 1782.

I used to advise you to come to this fair Region—for God's sake stay in England—there is more “ vernal delight

and joy" in one of our green Lawns than in all the olive-grounds and vine-yards of Italy.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MR. HAMILTON

ROME, *June 29th*, 1782.

I am in the midst of St. Peter's Festival, Cannon bouncing, trumpets flourishing, Pope gabbling, Cardinals stinking, and Fish frying in every corner. You would admire the Fireworks or I am much mistaken. Last Night five thousand rockets flew up from the Summit of Castle St. Angelo like a Flame of Fire and filled the air with millions of stars. The effect was beautiful and according to Custom, I wished for you to enjoy it.

This morn: I have been walking in the Galleries of Raphael, which command a full prospect of St. Peter's collonade, the Fountains, and the woods of the Barbarini Garden beyond. I hope you attend to the delights of Harrow—the deeper you drink of them at present the sooner you will see the glories of Rome and the more we shall be together. Adieu, my dear Hamilton, you will have longer Letters when I am settled for the Summer at Naples. Write as often as you can—the oftener—the happier you will make

Your sincerely afft. cousin,
WM. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

ROME, *29th June*, 1782.

You think I write from the Moon: Would to God I was there, ensphered in soft azure light, reclining on clouds, and uncorking my wits. Are you still in the Palace of Atlantes; your poor friend is in Pandemonium—stunned with noise and poisoned with sulphur. The Heat of Rome and the culinary perfumes in honour of St. Peter are such that I am ready to faint away and can hardly gather strength to tell you that I thank God you are recovering, that I am happy Elmsley has bought the Books for me—that I hope—Don Quixotte will soon arrive, that I beg you will see Cipriani paid, that you will have patience a fortnight longer when I shall have finished the conclusive Epistle [? Episode (to "Vathek")], that I reckon much upon Croft's Collection, and that I am yours from the depth of my Spirit.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* MRS. PETER BECKFORDROME, *June 30th*, 1782.

Take care of yourself, Louisa, and remember your sickness is only an exterior veil policy obliged you to put on—were it in earnest to fasten on your lovely limbs there would be an end of my happiness. I could not live and see your lips pale, your eyes sunk, and the bloom of your cheeks annihilated. Keep up your Spirits, my Love. Heaven knows you have restored mine by the dear lines you sent from —. Till they arrived a corroding melancholy preyed upon my vitals and darkened the bright sky of Italy. My steps were never bent to Casinos or Theatres; no, they were guided to desert Hills that lift themselves up above vast wastes with here and there a shepherd's hut or neglected Sepulchre. In such scenes I have mused away whole hours by the evening light, and the moss has often drank my tears. I never saw any human being in those wildernesses except one day a poor boy whose master had beaten him cruelly and who sat down amongst the broom to cry and call upon his Mother; but she it seems was at work, far off in some distant country that he pointed to beyond the hills. Wm., thought I to myself, is beyond those hills and so is Louisa. I must not approach the one, I cannot the other. My heart seemed ready to swell out of my bosom. I rose up from the moss on which I had cast myself down, and followed another path that wound between bushes of broom in full blossom. The wind strewed the ground with their sweet-scented yellow flowers. I wished it had lain me low. Returned to Rome, your Letter of the fourth June was the first object my eyes fixed upon. How did my heart throb when I opened it! How did it leap with exultation when I read the assurance of my . . . affection! And does she really love me? Are the delightful days of F[onthill] not yet elapsed from her memory? Does she still dwell with pleasure on the recollection of what passed in our subterraneous Apartment, where we used to recline, like voluptuous Orientals on silken beds in the glow of transparent curtains. Don't you remember, Louisa, the soft perfume of roses that seemed to float in the air and the affecting sound of the musick in the hall? —But, above all, does she yet love to talk of the hour,

when seizing her delicate hand, I led her bounding like a Kid to my Chamber. . . . Did she never mention the strange tales I invented for her amusement? Is she sensible that I would sacrifice my Soul to procure her a moment's enjoyment? Tell her she may search the Universe in vain for a Being so attached to her as your William. Encourage her little elegant fancies, feed her like a phoenix with perfumes. Bathe her neck with jessamine and make her observe and glory in observing its whiteness and the blue veins that steal across it. Kiss that swelling bud I am so fond of, and ask her if I may do the same when I return. . . . What do you think, Louisa? will she be faithfull, will I ever again be happy? Can her cursed relations separate us for ever? Is she not mine? Did she not swear she belonged to me? I faint, Louisa—support me. Tell her what I endure for her sake. Tell her my eyes are closed and opened upon her image—that she haunts my dreams, and that I still fancy I hear her calling to me as she was wont at day break. O Louisa, you said all my fondness, all my folly, would return. Had I not received those few lines she wrote to me I could not much longer have borne my existence. The Country round Rome is dismally parched, the winds suffocating, the exhalations deadly. Be assured there is more enjoyment in the *beecheen* groves of Fonthill than in all the stiff pines and tiresome vineyards of Italy. Louisa, what happiness should be our portion in those tranquil scenes could some fat *Succubus* waddle away with Peter.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

NAPLES, July 9th, 1782.

I wait for your Letters with trembling expectation. The last from . . . thrilled every nerve in my frame. My state is if possible more abject than ever. The Sea breezes blow in vain, in vain the beautiful prospects of the Bay present themselves. The transparent Sky is spread over my head to no purpose. I should droop in the Garden of Eden were you my lovely Angel banished from my sight.

Your Pictures are continually before me, no words can describe the fond delight with which I hang over them. You, if any Mortal is able, may explain to —

the sensations which make my heart ready to swell out of my bosom. I shall believe you another time, Louisa. You told me I should relapse again into all my weakness. Forgive my presumption. I will never pretend to lift up my head. O that I could feel my neck pressed by the little ivory feet of —. Tell her all my follies upon her account and let me know if she is glad I am her Slave. Have you seen her since the 9th June? Has she talked to you any more of her Wm. I must cease writing for the present. My head swims—the Room whirls round, the Sea I am looking upon, seems in my fascinated eyes to assume a thousand fantastic colours. Strange Islands appear rising from the Woods. Pity me Louisa.—Sustain me for God's sake.—Send to —, write to her, remind her of him who to lay one more night on her soft bosom would cast himself on thorns of Tron.

To the Same

NAPLES, *July 20th, 1782.*

What is become of you, Louisa? Since the fourth of June you have not sent me a line. I am quite alarmed at this unusual silence, and begin to think you are still preyed upon by illness. A fever occasioned by the fatal vapours of this unwholesome Country has reduced me very low. Like a sick child I cry after you and Wm. Halz is become quite loathsome in my sight. I would gladly give up all its pines and ruins for one dose of the fresh Downs round Fonthill. My Love I am too weak to write more. Adieu.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* ALEXANDER COZENS

POSILIPPO, *July 20th, 1782.*

I have written to you several times; but not once since I left that lovely green Country of England have I heard from you. The pestilential air of Italy has given me a fever, from which I am not yet entirely delivered. Your son has suffered; but is now well. How can you remain so long without telling me how you are? Do you fancy I am no longer anxious about you—do you imagine I have forgotten who accompanied me in the happiest journey I ever made? O those delightful days of Font-

hill! when will they return? Do you remember the plains we traversed and the golden clouds that hung over the Thames at Staines in defiance of Winter? Do you recollect my little Wm's transports? Alas, I remember all, all too well for my present happiness.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* MRS. PETER BECKFORD

PORTICI, *Aug. 27th, 1782.*

Why, as upon Gideon's fleece, are Readers of Heaven to descend on me alone? Why cannot I communicate to you the comfortable Calm I enjoy? I lead a peaceful retired life at Sir Wm. Hamilton's Casino at Portici and get up at Sunrise to breathe the fresh morning Air in a shrubbery of myrtles. In the midst of the thickets a little straw hut is erected, and further on you meet with some pines. Vineyards lie extended all around quite to the Sea Shore, which is covered with Villas and their Gardens of Cypress. Vesuvius crowns the scene with its crags and conical summit continually breathing forth a thin vapour. But I shall quit this lovely scene the twentieth of next Month, and hope to reach England, our temperate England in November. At Christmas may not I hope to possess you at Fonthill and tell you again and again that you have never been absent from my thoughts? Convey the enclosed to ——. She has written me a Letter that leaves me not the smallest doubt of her affection. The flame spreads, I perceive—you told me it would.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

PORTICI, *August 27th, 1782.*

Your letter found me peacefully seated in a Straw Hut surrounded by myrtles, a pine rising just before the door, the Sun setting in a Sea of gold and Vesuvius flushed with purple. It is not to be told with what pleasure I saw your handwriting, for your long silence made me tremble lest you should be ill. Thank God, I may now venture to tell you I am perfectly recovered. The pure air of Sir Wm. Hamilton's Casino, which I have inhabited these three weeks, has restored my Spirits and given them the most delightful flow. Arabian Tales spring up like Mushrooms on the fresh green Downs of

Fonthill! Don't forget Fonthill. How happy shall I feel if you spend your Christmas with me. Adieu, my dear Sir. I write in haste, poor Lady Hamilton being much indisposed.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

GENEVA, *October 12th, 1782.*

Here am I snug in the apartment of my Friend Huber and as happy as I can be without you; for to say the Truth I miss you more and more every hour.—An Extract of Bark, mixed up with some rare stinkabuss as Strong as old Nicholas's Scratch and bitter as your humble servant when in a passion, has driven the ague away, and it has never returned since I left Turin, six days ago; so I find myself in spirits to enjoy the wild Prospects of Mt. Cenis and the delightful verdure of the Savoyard Valleys. What would you, sunburnt Daemons of the Campi Phlossei give for our dewy vegetables and tufted chestnuts at this moment laden with clusters of Fruit? Pray gratify my Love of Coral and Nautilus, and when any secure opportunity offers send me a Box of Intaglio Pills. Talking of Boxes, will you be graciously pleased to order me one of the finest Tartaruca bevased and besrolled in the style you approve most of and of a good comfortable size—don't imagine it is for snuff, no, no, for Devilkins. Remember the paquet of Letters; as it is of the utmost consequence they should be in my possession.

What think you of the floating Batteries? How looks your Gooseman? Our Gooseman must be very triumphant. I hope the Gooseman of Spain won't now turn his thoughts towards my territories. Peace, I believe, is gone upon a visit to Truth in her Well. Heaven only knows whose Luck it will be to fish them up again.

I long for Summer impatiently, not because it is green bough time and that I may run wild about my shrubberies, but because it will bring you to England. In the course of my Peregrinations I picked up a rare old Japan Porringer which came out of the Medici Lumber Room; but hunted about for some Bronze Deities in vain. Alas! I must return to England without my Penates; 'tis your fault; but I know what you expect in Paradise, where you will certainly go, being a pure soul, to speak in *the*

side hole diverish style.* As you sweep along the milky way to the melodious jingling of St. Peter's keys and behold a grand perspective of the British Museum, all Glory and Transparence like the last scene of a Pantomime, Doors wide open—Pulvinaria set in the Entry Vases behind and whole world of bonetty Gentlewomen and their spouses sauntering about and observing what a wonderful *larned* Gemman was Sir Wm. H—— who knew what was underground just as well as you. Mr. Alderman Portsocken knows Turtle, tho' it lie snug under a silver kiver. I, humble Being who mean to lead a harmless innocent Life and hope to be transported to any place of Bliss (save Ab——m's Bosom), I shall sneak off to a little Pavillion full of Antiques on the verge of a hill. There, under shelter of a copse, let a stream be just perceived and on its Banks huge piles of Books and Macaroni. That divine food has been absolutely forbidden to enter my lean Chops since I landed at Leghorn. Alack a day! I have fared like a Hermit of Mount Libanus or like poor Father Anthony Pigmei, very often: I dare engage My Affectionate Compliments to him. As for Angelica, She is my Idol; so say everything that can be said in my name and tell her how I long to see Tele-machus's Papa and all the noble Family.

I should scribble to you for ever if old Huber was not telling Stories, the best imaginable, and young Huber making Sketches of Vathec's Adventures, the boldest you ever beheld. Adieu! then—thank your friends the Genii of the Arts, for your Deliverance, and, to conclude with Grandeur, those Genii excepted who shadow you with their wings, assure yourself there is no Being so much attached to you as your affectionate and obliged

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ALEXANDER COZENS

GENEVA, Tuesday, 18th Oct., 1782.

I write to you once more from the Land of freshness and verdure, of Chesnut woods and hanging copses to

* Alluding to a Moravian hymn upon the subject of our Lord's wounds in which is the following delectable passage:

A Side Hole Diver I will be:
O Side Hole, let me live in thee!

which Sylvanus retired when driven by popes and prelates from Italy. Your delightful Letter of the 17th of Sept. found me surrounded by my friends the Hubers reposing after my jumble down Mt. Cenis. The Mount Blanc veils himself in a Tabernacle of Clouds ; but to-day is so bright that I think he will cast a look upon Mortals. To-morrow I set forwards again, and ere long we shall meet. How happy shall I feel ! You must enjoy India with me at Fonthill this Christmas. No turbulent passions ruffle my tranquillity. I am calm as a Lake sheltered by Hills at Sunset when the Winds are still. Expect to find me pale and thin ; but my heart is warm and my spirits lively and I am ever

Your own aff.

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

PARIS, *Monday, Oct. 28th, 1782.*

Now I approach, the Mountains, the Lakes, the plains, recede, the Sea Coast begins to appear, and, afar off, I seem already to discover the white cliffs of our Island.

My dear Louisa, with what joy shall I see you again—with what Transport shall I plunge into my Indian Dreams ! . . . At Fonthill we shall be peaceful and happy, unless I am cruelly mistaken. . . . My Cousins are to be with me. Tho' pale and weak, my bosom is perfectly tranquil. I feel delightfully calm. My sensations I should imagine like those of a person who after struggling with the waves stretches out his limbs on a bank of green sward and lulled by the murmur of leaves sinks into repose. Take great care of the inclosed and if you love me convey it safe. . . .

To the same

PARIS, *Oct. 28th, 1783.*

My dear Louisa, I am hastening home as fast as possible, and, in spite of every dæmon, we will enjoy a few delightful days next Christmas in our glowing, sunny apartments. — is constancy itself. I long to shew you her Letters. She has caught fire, and burns with

such rapidity that I tremble lest she should be discovered and the most violent means employed to extinguish the conflagration.—Thank God, I am calm and happy, tho' pale as a Spectre and languid as a flower severed from its stalk. I shall revive upon seeing you and put forth new blossoms. The H[amiltons] are to come to us at Christmas.

After passing six tedious days at Calais and hearing contrary winds howl dismally, the sky cleared and we came over. . . . I landed by moonlight under the Cliffs, and walked to and fro a few minutes in spite of the Cold. . . . Let me see you Monday Eve. my dear Friend—adieu for a few hours—you are the only Being to whom I write. . . .

DOVER, *Saturday Eve, Novr. 9th, 1782.*

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MR. HAMILTON

FONTHILL, *January 4th, 1783.*

I thank you, my dear Hamilton, for your amusing Letter and heartily wish you all the joys that *Gunning* can give. May you splash and dash from morn to eve and be overhead in ears in Mud and enjoyment. We are very clean and quiet at Fonthill, ride out every Morn, and translate Arabic every Night. The Sun has smiled upon us almost without interruption and I have no cause to complain of our English Climate. This morning, the water looked delightfully blue and the wild fowl in high spirits, 'tis well for them that my wishes of having you with me were not realized. You certainly would have dipped many beautiful feathers in blood.

Mr. Henley and I have toiled like Dromedaries in the Library, which I can assure you is not a little improved. Don Quixotte blazes forth in all the pomp of Morocco and golden daggers.

Cozens creeps about like a domestic Animal—'twould be no bad scheme to cut a little cat's door for him in the great Portals of the Saloon. The Gallery looks very solitary now poor Louisa is away. You cannot imagine the solemn appearance of the Hall with its expiring Lamps towards midnight. I often fancy myself in the Catacombs of Egypt and expect to stumble over a Mummy. What

rare Mummies certain people of our Acquaintance would make! I long to stop their mouths with spice and swaddle them up, beyond the power of doing mischief. I beg you will give my best Compliments to Lord Ar[chibald], and assure him I shall ever retain the most grateful sense of the kind interest he is pleased to take in me. I hope we shall soon meet in town and that you will ever believe me,

Sincerely and affecty. Yrs.

W. BECKFORD.

The affectionate messages sent to a lady by Beckford through his cousin, Louisa, require explanation. When he was last in England he saw in the Assembly Rooms in Bath a young girl whose appearance attracted him. He secured an introduction and made the acquaintance of Lady Margaret Gordon, sole surviving daughter of Charles, fourth Earl of Aboyne. He fell in love with her, wooed her, and eventually won her. They were married on May 5, 1783, and went abroad for the honeymoon.

TUNBRIDGE, *Wednesday,*
6th May, 1783.

I am in a strange Room wainscotted with cedar and lumbered up with chairs that gleam with brass. Yews and Spruce Firs wave before the Windows and between their dark boughs a few miserable sheep, for the Sky, totally forgetful of May, sends down snow and hail and a sort of rain which partakes of both and is worse than either. These gloomy circumstances serve only to set off the sweet smiles of Lady M[argaret]'s countenance. She looks happy, and that sight gives me more joy than Sunshine ever imported. I wish you had been walking with us yesterday evening on the terrace of this solitary mansion. The lights we saw twinkling amongst distant Woods and in shady hollows would have awakened a series of romantic conjectures.

SECHERON, *June 8th,* 1783.

My Friend, I have been fifty times on the point of writing to you, and as often have I been interrupted. I

lead a quiet uniform stupid sort of life on the banks of the Lake ; but never angle like the rest of my neighbours. Not a soul except old Huber has the least idea why I should be discontented in the midst of smirking faces and spruce habitations. Every now and then the recollections of past times and happy moments for ever gone, rouses me from my torpid state and forces me to run wildly about on the Shore. Sometimes I lie down in an open meadow and observe the clouds rolling along the Sky and casting their shadows on the Mountains. 'Tis then innumerable fancies rush upon me. Strange hopes and as strange fears ! During these moments I dream of Wm. and of Fonthill whilst the confused murmur of leaves and water lulls me to sounder rest. Lady M[argaret] walks about gathering flowers from the Shrubs which almost dip their boughs in the Lake. Why am I not happy ?—Is it not my own fault that I am miserable ?

GENEVA, *July 28th, 1783.*

I know not how it happens that I have not received any of your Letters, for I make no doubt that you have written to me. Let me hear as soon as possible or I shall be anxious and uneasy. I am just returned from the Region of Ice and Crystal, from the source of the Arveyron (?) and the silent retired valleys at the base of the Mont Blanc. The image of my dearest Wm. pursued me even into these days of solitudes. I passed three Evenings in a thick forest of Larch whose intermingled branches are fringed with heavy moss, totally abandoned to my reveries. Would to God you could share them ! would to God I might converse with you once more upon the subject nearest my heart ! To-morrow we go to Evian, that romantic Village amongst forests of Chesnut on the banks of the Lake which I have so often described and where I have enjoyed many a peaceful hour ; but where I shall now wander like a melancholy Ghost too full of the remembrance of the World it has left to taste the pleasures of that into which it is entering.

EVIAN, *August 26th, 1783.*

☞ My Friend, what can have prevented your writing to me ? Do you imagine I am grown insensible to your regard, and that I am dead to our World of Ideas ? You are quite mistaken. I am what I have ever been. The

Woods, the Mountains, the wild flowery hills, have not ceased to appear delightful in my eyes.—I am not lost ; but restored to myself.—The consciousness of a secure tranquil happiness has recalled these sportive fancies which were wont to form our dearest amusements. I can give myself up to Dreams of India and antient times without fearing to wake with a dreadful start to misery and agitation. I shall return happy and contented with a Companion I love and who loves everything that amuses me. You, of all others, may reckon upon her affection, for she knows how long and how sincerely you have been my Friend. Farewell—convince me by writing immediately, that you likewise are what you have been.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

COLOGNY, Oct. 20th, 1783.

I suppose you have heard of those strange globes invented at Paris which rise into the air though encumbered with the weight of human animals. I wish we could procure one and travel together amongst the clouds. At night we would illuminate our flying palace and hover like angry meteors above the habitations of our enemies who, perhaps, have not yet been made acquainted with this wonderful invention. Like a certain mischievous bird which Ovid celebrates, we would dart down upon the graceful innocents and carry them off in spite of the screams of their relations. Kitty, I am certain, would stand on tip-toe to be borne away, and some of her little wanton sisters might likewise slip into our machine if you beckoned. Dont you remember one in particular with teeth like pearls, dark Indian hair and Circassian eyes ? Unless my poor memory deceived me she has often thrown her arms round your neck with all the delight of a child who loves playing with ivory. Think of Seraph's rueful eyes cast upwards upon our ascent, and the piteous wailings of Aunt E. ! Think how triumphantly we should sail through the calm blue aether, ten thousand feet above this dirty planet ! Sometimes, however, we might descend to tread its surface at our lovely favourite's desire, and alight upon the summits of solitary hills enclosed by impenetrable forests. There we would gather flowers and breathe the fresh woody perfume of the thick foliage. The peasants

and savages, cannibals and pigmies, or whatever you please—for who knows in what region we might descend?—struck by our supernatural appearance would prostrate themselves at our feet, and offer our Godships the best fruits, the richest creams, the brownest bread, and the most delicious venison. I fancy I see you stretching out your lovely arm with an air of protection and receiving their offerings with the air of a Divinity long used to be worshipped. You may imagine I too should put on one of my stately airs, and little K. look full with those heavenly eyes which I cannot help believing impossible to behold with indifference. My imagination is so possessed with this delightful illusion that I seem to hear the rustle of the boundless wood mixing with the roar of a waterfall and the acclamations of the savages. Methinks the evening sun almost lost in a golden haze reposes at the extremity of the forest and casts long gleams on the hill where we are reposing. I see our sphere rising majestically from the turf and K., laden with flowers, just making to enter it. Your little attendant, methinks, is bounding along the hanging gallery, whilst other favourites are smoothing the silken mattresses within.

COLOGNY, *October 21st, 1783.*

5. O'clock Eve.

I seem to walk in light and tread in Air. My Happiness is inexpressible. I have just received a Letter in answer to the one you conveyed, so tender and affectionate, so perfectly all my warmest wishes could desire, that my heart leaps with joy and I run wild on the slope of a Hill overlooking the Lake, unable to contain myself. The Weather in harmony with my feelings is mild and genial as the Month of May. I have been inhaling the soft perfume of roses which are newly blown and giving up my Soul to delightful reveries in which I fancy I behold you emerging with Wm. from the light clouds which hover about yonder Hill. The tinkling sound of sheep bells is caught by my ear and I see the herds winding slowly between beds of fern. Why are you not enjoying with me this calm evening hour? How anxiously do I wish to behold once more the light of the setting sun glow on your friendly countenance. Take care of the enclosed I entreat you and send it immediately.

COLOGNY, *Nouv.* 18th, 1783.

Of all pleasures that of feeling oneself obliged to our best and most affectionate friend is the greatest. I enjoy this sensation at present and thank you with a transport of gratitude, my pen can never convey. The Letter you enclosed is more delightful to me than the return of health after a painful illness. Good God, my dear Friend, how fortunate I am to have inspired the Object of all my tenderness with so warm and so constant an Affection. Neither menaces or sufferings have had any effect. She calls me her own dear Wm., the sovereign of her heart, and swears whilst life remains never to withdraw her allegiance. You will be surprized and delighted to hear that Lady M[argaret] has not the least jealousy and in the Letter I enclose and which I entreat you to take care of, she assures . . . with her own hand of her affection. . . . Before you receive this you will have received your Son, who when I saw him last was well in health ; but ill in Spirits.—The rivulets are frozen, the wind boisterous, the Lake in a fury and the Mountains lost in Clouds of Snow, but my fire burns cheerfully and the Letter from — lies in my bosom, so I am warm and happy. If you were but here, I should approach contentment as nearly as Mortals may. I hear from Fonthill that they are working with all their might ; but that I must not expect to enjoy the fruits of their labours till this time twelve months. Be that as it will, I must return in the Spring. I hear a voice whose tone pierces my very Soul and throws me into a delirium against the influence of which I cannot steel myself. The attraction is too powerful, it is in vain for me to think of resistance.

GENEVA, *Decr.* 28th, 1783.

I write in all the hurry of packing up and setting out for Paris. Not having heard from William makes me melancholy, and the North wind roaring over the Lake helps little to cheer my Spirits. The Sky is heavy with Snow, and the frozen aspects of the Mountains strikes me with terror. To-night I am warm and secure in a long range of apartments, half visible by the glow of embers, for all the lights are extinguished. To-morrow I shall shiver on the banks of the little ill-natured Lake of

Nantua, continually exhaling noxious vapours. Eagerly do I wish myself restored to Fonthill and to you. I am quite impatient for you to see how much I love Lady Margaret and how totally she is free from prejudice and *wifeishness*.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. PETER BECKFORD

FONTHILL, May 20th, 1784.

I think, my dear Louise, you will have reason to believe me gone to the dark country from whence no mortal can return. I have been so hurried and jaded of late that I have neither had time nor spirits to tell you how often my soul is transported to the regions you inhabit, and how eagerly it longs to converse once more with yourself. Write to me immediately, I beseech you, and let me know where you have determined to pass the summer, for surely it was in your power to have come home and enjoyed the fresh turf and foliage of Fonthill. L^y M[argaret] will harbour no prejudices, nor suffer herself to look upon such a graceful, lovely being as yourself in the light of a malignant friend. You know but too well the venom that has been spit at us both, but be assured not a drop has tainted L^y M[argaret].

In about a month I expect *a young one*. Will you not be highly curious to see another little animal *de ma façon*, for I flatter myself it will turn out a true William.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to ROBERT PIGOTT

CHÂTEAU DE LA TOUR,
26th Feb., 1786.

DEAR PIGOTT,

I envy not your Temple of Apollo, nor the tiresome Levels and vineyards of Burgundy. Calmly resigned to my present Situation I cling fast to my tutelary Mountains. When shall we see you again at their Base? I take for granted you propose returning to the shade of your plane trees in the Spring. We continue the favorites of Heaven in respect to Weather, having violets and wall-flowers in profusion. Flies buzzing a summer song almost every day on the Terrace and now and then a butterfly by way of regale. Are you not astonished and have we not

reason to adore the great Mithra? I find by your Letter just received that you have enjoyed at Dijon the same blessed Sunshine which has been cheering the solitary expanse of our Lake, and gilding the snows of our Mountains. I learn also to my great surprise that you are going to breathe the *freshness* of Pan and the *vernal* exhalations of the Rue Platrière where the grand Collection you talk of will be exposed. I have long since been favored with a Catalogue and have sent commissions particularly for the L. P. Boileau and Fontenelle, twenty or thirty Vols. : and some volumes on the Black Art.—Our Balls continue quite amusing—a fine show of young innocent Tits in the first heyday of Spirits and Tender inclinations, prancing and curvetting and giggling and whisking from one room to another. No Papas, no mammas, no Uncles, a long range of apartment, animating musick, flowing drapery, snug corners in the Windows—four foot deep.—Rare work for young fellows you must allow, and nice hotbeds for expanding the hearts of these lovely blossoms.—I leave you to imagine the wriggling Waist and languishing eyes of Madlle. de B. endowed as well as most of her fair Companions with an exquisite sensibility for lyrical performances.

The years 1783 to 1786 make little call upon Beckford's biographer. The honeymoon had been spent in travelling, and when it was over, the bride and bridegroom, still ardent lovers, stayed for a while at Cologny, near Geneva. Towards the end of the year, having made up their minds to sojourn for an indefinite period under southern skies, they decided to rent a more commodious residence, and took up their quarters at the Château de la Tour, near Vevey. There, in June 1784, was born a daughter, Margaret Maria Elizabeth, and on May 14, 1786, another, Susan Euphemia. A fortnight later the young mother died. The marriage had been an ideal union, and Beckford's grief was terrible. His friends, fearful of his losing his reason or taking his life, rushed him from place to place, hoping that change of scene might distract his thoughts, even momentarily, from his loss. To some extent this



MARGARET AND SUSAN BECKFORD
GEORGE ROMNEY

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plan was successful, for after some weeks Beckford became again a reasonable being. He allowed arrangements to be made for his children to be sent to his mother, then living at West End, between the villages of Hampstead and Kilburn ; but himself continued to move restlessly from town to town, seeking not change of place, but change of thought. Early in 1787 he came for a few weeks to England. Though time mercifully mitigated the transports of his grief, it never ousted from his mind the memory of his gracious, beautiful wife. Rarely he spoke of her, but when he did mention her it was in a way that made it clear that she was always in his mind ; though his wealth and genius made him the target of fortune-hunters, he never even thought to marry again ; and his tender memories of her, enduring through the passage of years, acting upon an emotional nature, may have had more to do with his subsequent retirement than is generally supposed.

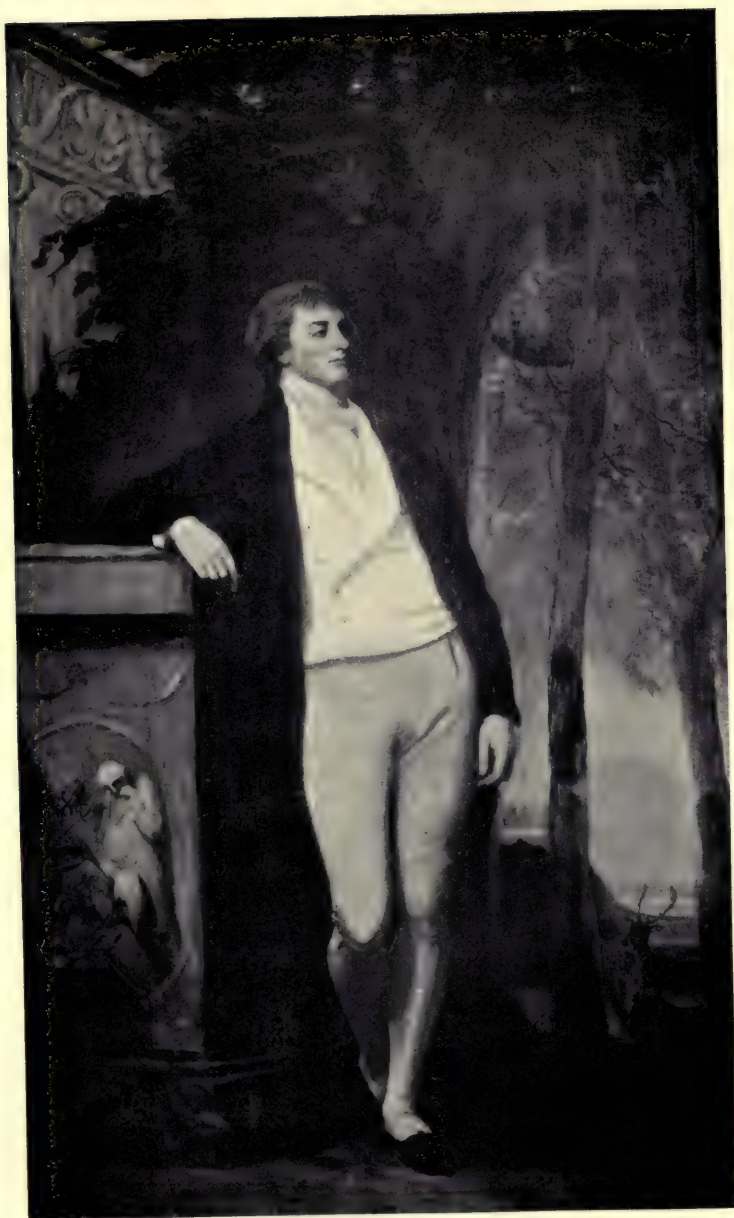
CHAPTER IX

SPAIN, PORTUGAL, FRANCE (1787-1796)

Beckford visits Portugal : Becomes acquainted with the Marialva family at Lisbon : His impressions of the country : A bull-fight : In Spain : Returns to Portugal : Then goes to Paris : A suspect : His life in danger : Chardin effects his escape to England : At Fonthill : At Lausanne : Purchases Gibbon's library : Alcobaça and Batalha : Byron on Beckford's "paradise" at Montserrat : Beckford's two burlesque novels

BECKFORD's life falls naturally into two divisions ; the first including the years during which he wandered over Europe, the second the fifty years he lived in England at Fonthill and at Bath. The final years of the earlier period have now to be discussed ; but this can be done very briefly because Beckford's impressions of Spain and Portugal have already been published in book form, and need not here be recapitulated.

Beckford, after a brief sojourn in England, left Falmouth for Portugal, where he arrived in April (1787). At Lisbon he made the acquaintance of the Marquis of Marialva, and, the acquaintance ripening into intimacy, facilities, rarely vouchsafed to a foreigner, were given him to become acquainted with the affairs of the court and the kingdom. Thus, he had the advantage—and this is one of the reasons why his Portuguese letters are so valuable—of being able to record from within the state of Portugal on the eve of the French Revolution, the effects of which were soon discernible in the neighbouring countries. Beckford's impressions may be summed up in his own words, uttered in the course of a conversation with Cyrus Redding.



WILLIAM BECKFORD
GEORGE ROMNEY

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"The Portuguese Court was not more dissolute than other courts at that time," he said. "There was great goodness of heart in some of the nobility and ecclesiastics; but they were an indolent, luxurious race. The country people were excellent, tainted with few vices; the character of the Lisbon *canaille* abominable—the most flagrant vices were common in the towns. The ignorance of all classes, too, was deplorable. The Prior of St. Vincent's, my friend, was an ecclesiastic of great learning and accomplishments—an excellent man. There were few his equals in Portugal. But the beauty of nature there—it was a heaven upon earth. I long more than ever for such a climate."

Most of the places Beckford visited, and the spectacles he witnessed, are described in his volume of travels, but the following account (in a letter) of a bull-fight finds no place in it, and may therefore be given here.

July 8th, 1787.

The Marquis of M[arialva] and Don Pedro, who dined here to-day, accompanied me in the Evening to the Bull-fight. Twelve of the devoted Animals were standing with all the dullness and resignation of Oxen in the middle of an open Amphitheatre capable of holding 3 or 4,000 people. The poor beasts gave no signs of courage or ferocity. I never saw a quieter party in one of our cow-yards of Tottenham Court Road. We had waited about a quarter of an hour in one Box, when there tumbled into the Arena a dozen hideous Negroes, grotesquely habited in a sort of Indian-Chinese fashion, who, after several awkward leaps and vaultings, drove the herd of bullocks into an enclosure fastened up with painted boards. Then entered a procession of Blackamoors in laced jackets preceding the principal Combatant and his aide-de-Camp mounted on fine Horses, prancing and curvetting. Having paraded round the Amphitheatre and saluted the Company in the boxes, the door of the enclosure was thrown open and a Bull forced out, much against his inclination. He stood stock still for a moment or two, till, the Horseman whirling round him, darted his lance into his shoulder. Tho' stung with

how the cloak of religious Enthusiasm sits upon my Lord Chancellor's sturdy shoulders. I would not come within whine of Ly. Effingham, Lady Stafford or Lady Euphemia for a thousand pounds. Protestant Calvinistical Cantings will not [settle] upon my Stomach. Neither prudence nor propriety could prevent my throwing them up with loud and bitter reachings. I pray in vain to St. Anthony to beg fair weather of the powers above. Nothing can be fouler than the sky, or more filthy than the Land. Several new species of noxious reptiles are said to have made their first appearance above ground, to the confusion of Farmers and Naturalists. Tho' there is allowed to be nothing new under the Sun, you see clouds and darkness have been productive of some novelty. I have been greatly disordered by the unwholesome dampness of the Atmosphere. My guts growl and grumble incessantly. I read from Morn till Night, having purchased at the Soubise Sale a number of original out-of-the-way Authors which delight and surprise me beyond measure. I have thirty or forty volumes in Latin, Spanish and Portuguese, about China and Japan, full of the rarest stories imaginable of Castles, Treasures and miracles. Pray did not I leave in your hands three volumes of Madame du Boccage and a little book of Mother Starck's called *les Contes du Serrail*? Lady C[raven] continues pressing me to come to Anspack, and I am half inclined to postpone my visit to the Rocks of Misilmeri and accept her invitation. She honours me with the title of Arabian, tho' I confess I have done but little to deserve it. The M[argrave], like a lump of dough, takes what form she pleases. I am sorry to hear of my Babe with the hideous mane's yellowness, because I am certain it will torment my Mother. I beg you will let me know particularly how she does and that you will believe me

Most sincerely and affectionately,

Yrs,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

At Paris Beckford remained, buying books and curios; and he was there when, in July 1789, the Bastille was demolished by the mob. In spite of the social upheavings, however, he stayed on, apparently enjoying himself very much.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THOMAS WILDMAN

PARIS, 29th Nov., 1791.

Happy, aye, thrice happy, are those who in this good Capital and at this period have plenty of money—their Kingdom is come, their will is done on Earth, if not in Heaven. By St. Anthony, my dear Friend, I never was better amused since I existed. I have the most delightful apartments, and the best wine and the best Bristol waters, and the bed, everything. You cannot expect therefore that I should leave one farthing of the sum you have (of mine) undrawn for. No, no, you may curtail at Fonthill as much as you judge convenient—I have forgotten Fonthill—and everybody in England except yourself and Mrs. Wildman. Madame Seraphina thought I should answer her Epistles—not I, indeed!—*I am above making any sort of use of them whatever.*

The finest dinner which ever Flanders or Saxony produced is scarcely thought worthy to garnish my sideboards—or be spread under my boots when I return in all the majesty of mud, from dashing in the most invincible manner thro' the sloughs of the Bois-de-Boulogne, attended by half-a-dozen Captains and Lieutenants of the Garde Nationale. Don't suppose I wait one instant for my carriage at the Opera (where, by the bye, I have taken possession of the Prince de Condé's Box)—not a bit—down drives my coach, upon the slightest signal, to the admiration and desolation of penniless Dukes, Counts, and half-pay Ambassadors. I neither cant nor whine nor wear out the cushions at St. Sulpice with kneeling—St. Anthony having given me leave of absence from such sort of places—till he had settled things in Portugal—to my wishes.—W^{ld} to God—he w^d take better care of my oranges—I cannot imagine what the deuce is become of them. The Rochdale, Captain Lake, is longer between Lisbon and London than any ship I ever heard of.

Beckford was still at Paris in January 1793 when Louis XVI., in the sacred name of liberty, equality, and fraternity, was beheaded in the Place de Louis Quinze: it is said he was actually present at the execution. About that time he became a suspect, and at one moment his

liberty, and perhaps his life too, was in danger. Chardin, the bookseller, heard of his patron's peril, ran to his house, made him change his clothes for those of a "commissionaire libraire," and, under cover of night, conducted him to the shop of Mérigot, another and more celebrated dealer in rare tomes. There for a while Beckford masqueraded as a clerk, until Chardin secured for him a passport in an assumed name, when the millionaire fled to England. Beckford, who never failed to remember and acknowledge kindness, in return for Chardin's services, settled on him an annuity of 2400 francs.

How long Beckford stopped in England is not known, but he went to Fonthill, and gave various instructions for the improvement of the house and grounds, and ordered the erection of a wall to enclose his estates. This wall was to be completed by the autumn of 1796, and while it was being built he again went abroad. Early in 1794 he was at Lausanne, where he purchased Gibbon's library from the historian's heirs for £950. The library consisted of more than six thousand volumes, and contained editions of the principal historical writers, and, what doubtless interested the purchaser more, an extensive collection of books of travel—the most valuable work was an edition of Eustathius.* "I bought the library to have something to read when I passed through Lausanne," Beckford said. "I shut myself up for six weeks from early in the morning until night, only now and then taking a ride. The people thought me mad. I read myself nearly blind." Beckford packed up about two thousand five hundred of the most valuable volumes, which he proposed to send to Fonthill; but he never carried out his intention, and subsequently

* "It is, of all the libraries I ever saw, that of which I should most covet the possession—that which seems exactly what any gentleman or gentlewoman fond of letters could wish. Although in no particular walk of literature a perfect collection, in the classical part perhaps less than any other; and in the Greek less than in the Latin Classics, still there are many good editions of all the best authors in both languages. The books, though neither magnificent in their editions or in their bindings, are all in good condition, all clean, such as one wishes to read, and could have no scruple in using."—MARY BERRY, *Journals*, July 6, 1803.

presented the entire collection to a local physician, Scholl by name.

From Lausanne Beckford went to Madrid, and then to Portugal, where he arrived in May.

The Prince Regent of Portugal, for reasons with which I was never entirely acquainted (he wrote on June 3), took it into his royal head, one fair morning, to desire I would pay a visit to the monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha, and to name my intimate and particular friends, the Grand Prior of Aviz, and the Prior of St. Vincent's, as my conductors. Nothing could be more gracious, or, in many respects, more agreeable ; still, just at this moment, having what I thought much pleasanter engagements nearer home, I cannot pretend that I felt so much enchanted as I ought to have been.

A royal wish is a command, and Beckford obeyed, thereby enriching the world with the twelve letters, which were published in 1835, under the title of "Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha."

During this last visit to Portugal Beckford resided at Montserrat, near Cintra, since immortalised by Byron.

"There thou too, Vathek ! England's wealthiest son,
Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware
When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,
Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.

"Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan,
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow,
But now, as if a thing unblest by Man,
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou !
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide ;
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are thy pleasaunces on earth supplied ;
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle hand." *

It must not be inferred from these lines (as is usually done), that Beckford had built for himself a house at Montserrat. "The fact of the matter is this," he

* "Childe Harold," Canto I., stanzas xxii.-xxiii.

explained to Cyrus Redding. "On my first visit to Portugal, I saw the situation; it was a beautiful Claude-like place, surrounded by a most enchanting country. It belonged to a M. de Visme, a merchant, of whom, at the time, I could not obtain it. Afterwards, however, he pulled down the house, and built another in barbarous Gothic. On my return, I rented the place of him; for although he had knocked down the old edifice, he could not level the hills, nor root up the woods. I build it! 'twas built by a carpenter from Falmouth."

It was probably during this last tour that Beckford wrote the two burlesques, "Modern Novel Writing, or, The Elegant Enthusiast: and Interesting Emotions of Arabella Bloomville," and "Azemia, A Novel: containing Imitations of the Manner, both in Prose and Verse, of many of the Authors of the Present Day." These books were issued respectively in 1796 and 1797, the former under the pseudonym of "The Right Hon. Lady Harriet Marlow," and the latter was by "Jacquetta Agnetta Marcana Jenks." It seems likely that the novels his "sister," Mrs. Hervey, wrote, suggested to him these burlesques.

MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

Jan. 12, 1790.

How can I express how highly flattered I feel at the approbation he gives to Louisa*—I was vain enough to hope you would find something that would please you in this Tale, but I never dared to think that you would find so much, and what charms me most is, that you approve of what I myself deem the best parts of the Book—The fragment of the Russian Prince I endeavoured to make interesting, and the farewell scene I wrote *con amore*. I hear from all quarters that the Book takes wonderfully; Hookham from the first was pleased with it, and sanguine

* "Louisa; or, The Reward of an Affectionate Daughter. A Novel." Published anonymously, in 2 vols., by Hookham, New Bond Street, London, 1790.

as to its success. But the Printer has in some places made cruel mistakes, and to my great discomposure constantly spells *embarrassed* wrong. This however can't be helped, and if other people's misfortunes can afford any consolation, I may find some in the errors that Cadell has made in Mrs. Smith's *Ethelinde*.

MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

Jan. 15, 1790.

You flatter me most agreeably, my dear brother; but I cannot believe that with all your partiality you can think Louisa worthy to be compared with anything Miss Burney ever wrote; nor indeed with Mrs. Smith's *Emmeline*. As to her last production, I think it so inferior to the other, that possibly Louisa may meet with indulgent persons who may like *her* as well, if not better than the *Recluse of the Lake*; but perhaps even in this supposition Vanity misleads me—I rejoice that you are of opinion that I have happily hit off the characters and style of conversation of persons in very different ranks of Life—that with a little observation is by no means difficult to do. To form the plot, to endeavour to present new characters to the Public attention, to make each adhere to his own throughout the piece, to interest the passions and finally to bring on the denouëment certainly cost me much trouble; but I do declare, I never dared to hope that my Book would have been so well received, for I daily receive the most flattering Eulogiums on it.—Yours, my dear Brother, particularly gratifies every feeling of my Soul.

MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

June 20, 1790.

Though I think your partiality to your *sister* prevents your giving Miss Burney all the credit she deserves for Genius, Elegance of Diction, etc., I cannot help quaffing with delight the Bowl of Flattery you present; be assured you alone could give it that zest which renders it so acceptable—As for Charlotte Smith her landscapes are perfect Claudes, and I was not at all surprised to hear that her pencil equalled her pen. This I learned from a

Lady who knew her and the following anecdotes concerning her.—She is about my age, married when very young to a Sussex gentleman, the owner of a place called, I think, Baynal Park, or something that sounds like it. Their mutual extravagance soon plunged them into difficulties. After struggling some time with Calamity they were forced to sell their Estate. Her Husband unfortunately had that rage for Projects, which she so ludicrously described in *Emmeline*; with the wreck of their small fortune they might have gone on tolerably had not some visionary scheme constantly defeated their economical plans, and at the moment they are suffering under the pressure of Distress, which, however, she does not (I am told) feel very deeply, for she is naturally thoughtless or rather giddy, and I presume, like other people of lively imaginations, she finds in her own mind sources of delight unknown to the vulgar.

It is supposed that the principal heroine of “*Azemias*” was intended for Mrs. Hervey; and Thomas Moore relates in his *Journals* how that lady “read these parodies on herself quite innocently, and only now and then suspecting that they were meant to laugh at her, saying, ‘Why, I vow and protest, here is my grotto, etc. etc.’” These burlesques, which are a reversion to the style of the “*Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters*,” are good fooling; but to-day their appeal is, of course, only to those readers acquainted with the novels of the indifferent writers who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER X

AN ADVENTURE IN DIPLOMACY (1797)

Inducements for Beckford to become a politician : A letter from Lord Thurlow : Beckford becomes M.P. for Wells : Later sits for Hinton : A silent member : Comments on politicians : O'Connell, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord John Russell, Palmerston, Lord Howick : His expectations of a serious political crisis : His desire to be sent as British envoy to Lisbon : His attempt to negotiate a peace between France and England in 1797 : The correspondence relating thereto

It seemed almost a matter of course that the son of Alderman Beckford should take a prominent place in the political world. He had every inducement to do so. His father's name would have been an excellent introduction, and his father's friends were indeed anxious to secure his assistance; he had leisure, wealth, and the choice of two constituencies where his influence was paramount; but, as readers of the letters written by him in the later years of his minority will have foreseen, parliament had no attraction for him. He took no steps to be returned as member for either borough, and so well was his lack of interest known to Lord Thurlow, that the latter, in 1784, had no hesitation in taking upon himself the responsibility to advise Beckford's agent, without waiting for his employer's instructions from abroad, again to return his nominee Lloyd Kenyon (afterwards Master of the Rolls), for Hinton.

LORD THURLOW *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

[April, 1784]

DEAR MR. BECKFORD,

Besides the genuine regret which your Friends and Lady Margaret's must certainly feel for your Absence from

England, a particular occasion has made me wish you were here to decide for yourself a doubt entertained by Mr. Wildman: which, however, if it had not been suggested by him, would, I own, never have occurred to me: and I have taken upon myself to advise him accordingly. His doubt was, whether upon the change which has lately happened in the the King's Government, he should re-elect Mr. Kenyon to Hinton; that is, use your interest for that purpose, which doubtless would be effective. And his doubt, as I collected it, proceeded on two grounds; first, that you might wish to sit in Parl^t yourself; and secondly, that it seem'd to embark you on one side or other, without your concurrence. As to the first, I have always considered, and clearly understood, that, whenever you entertain such a wish, you have but to intimate it, and it must be gratified forthwith. That point, therefore, will remain, as it has constantly done, altogether in your own power and choice; and the Mode is of no moment, whether the vacancy shall be created by taking the Chiltern Hundreds, or the Office of Attorney-General. On the other hand, to withdraw your assistance to re-elect him now [is] just as express a declaration of your purpose to remove him, as if you had desired him to take the Chiltern Hundreds. Now, as nobody here could undertake to notify him such a desire, he certainly would not have vacated by taking any other office, without either being re-elected, or knowing your wishes to the contrary. Under these circumstances I took it to be very clear, that he [Wildman] should assist him [Kenyon] with your interest, as he had no intimation from you to the contrary; considering this not only as the safest side, but as one upon which for the reasons I intimated before to err was impossible. His other difficulty, I confess, did not strike me at all; first, because a thing which all the world would regard as a thing of course, done by an agent, while you were totally out of the reach of communication, was perfectly clear of all construction affecting you. Secondly, because if you had been within the reach of deciding at all on one side or the other, I have no doubt on which it would have fallen. This I say, partly in reference to many conversations which have passed between us, and which you do know; partly in reference to that Object, which you have trusted in my hands, and which in this channel of corre-

spondence it is obviously impossible for me to explain myself.* Although I have great confidence, that I cannot have acted wrong on this occasion, yet it will add much to my satisfaction to learn from you that you are of the same opinion.

THURLOW.

Beckford, however, could always be relied upon to do the unexpected, and though he was at the time travelling abroad with his wife and had no notion when he would return to England, he decided now to enter Parliament. He generously allowed Thurlow to carry out his plan to secure the election of Lloyd Kenyon at Hinton, and had himself in his absence nominated for Wells. He was returned for that town, which he represented until the general election of 1790, when he caused himself to be elected member for Hinton, which seat he retained until, on the last day of 1794, he took the Chiltern Hundreds. Between 1784 and 1794 he was little in England, and therefore his retirement in the latter year was not directly due to the fact that he was about to pay another visit to Portugal. The reason is to be found in the fact that he had no taste for public life, and indeed, though he sat again for Hinton from 1806 to 1820, he was, on the rare occasions when he did attend the House, a silent member. He was too easily wearied by the indifferent speakers, and far too impulsive to become a useful member of Parliament; while he was the last person in the world to submit to the trammels of office. "Politics was not my mission," he said, towards the end of his life. "I was not destined to lead in politics, and was too stiff-necked to be a follower." But though he affected disdain of politics, he was, to the end of his days, passively interested in statesmen, and in the late thirties upon some of them and their works he pronounced amusing verdicts. O'Connell he described as "a Dan-o'-the-wisp, a terrible *ignis fatuus*

* See correspondence concerning Beckford's desire to be created a peer, p. 229 of this work.

riding on the back of the Roman Catholic Church, and dancing about in the bogs of Ireland," and he pronounced his orations to be "an excellent imitation of arrowroot made out of potato-scrapings"; while the Duke of Buckingham he set down as "the prize donkey, paraded about at all the agricultural shows, and upon which the farmer is seen riding to the Jerusalem of monopoly." Lord John Russell he thought "a hobbler," adding that this politician "had maimed himself by a compound fracture of finality and therefore he always limped after the rest of his party," and prophesying that "his Lordship would dwindle down to a full stop in the House of Commons, for he was only the miniature of a great statesman." On the other hand, he believed Palmerston to be clever, but regretted that "politics seem to have the same effect upon his mind that opium has upon the brain of a Chinaman. He runs after the humming bird of political chimeras as a Cupid does after a butterfly." He was in favour of the Reform Bill, thinking it was "not only wanted to amuse the people, but might be looked upon as the manufacturing interest cutting its eye-tooth." A few statesmen, too, won his approval, notably Lord Grey and Lord Morpeth, while he expressed his belief that Lord Howick possessed a mind far beyond the position he had made for himself. "I only wish he would lead the party," he said, "depend upon it he is the best man for the times; he is high-minded, honest, prudent, and a good man—rare qualities in these times for dealing with the soldier of expediency."

Beckford had probably been so deeply horrified by the scenes he had witnessed at Paris during the Revolution that to the end of his days he was imbued with the dread that such happenings might come to pass in his own country. It was this that made him an alarmist, and caused him always to anticipate the worst, and to regard the thirties of the last century as "black, bloodshot times." He was convinced that a serious political crisis was at

hand; but he admitted he was greatly pleased on his return to England in 1796, after his long absence, to find that the rumours of the disaffection prevailing among the lower classes at home had been vastly exaggerated. "When I looked at the cottages, and contrasted their appearance with the dwellings of the country I had quitted," he said, "I thought to myself, that these men with their windows so nicely glazed, are not likely to throw stones."

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* G. CLARK

FONTHILL, 1832.

I do not wonder at the progress of emigration. Flee from the wrath to come, is sounding through the atmosphere like a blast from the dread trumpet we read of in the Apocalypse. Lord Grey and his set think of nothing and look to nothing but their places. The vision of the trunkless hand seems to have warned the premier to little purpose. He keeps on—on—on—as if advancing to a bed of roses, instead of the gulf of ruin and despair!

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* G. CLARK

FONTHILL [1834?]

Disraeli's predictions are drawing on towards accomplishment. The comet-shock of the two Houses must soon take place. It is to be supposed the Tories are prepared—army staunch to a man—artillery ready to fly here, there and everywhere; great captains' armour buckled on; and plans of campaign digested. If such arrangements be not already made, and in the most intrepid and masterly manner, the conflict will assume a dreary aspect for those who have anything to lose. The moment a decided vote of their present Lordships sweeps out Lord Grey, in march the Unions. Then rise the flames, signal for plunder and for blood. All execrable varieties of desecration and confiscation will fill the cup of horrors till its poisonous overflowings blister and

destroy every object upon which a drop falls ; and those drops will fall thicker than dew.

If Beckford never took any active part in politics, he had, however, a fair share of patriotism, and would gladly, on occasion, have served his country as a diplomatist. "You are not aware, perhaps, that I offered my services to the government, at a critical moment, as an envoy to the court of Lisbon," he told Cyrus Redding. "My intimacy with the Prince Regent, and my intimacy with the Marialva family, adapted me for such a post. It came to nothing ; but I think I could have done my country some service. In the Marialva villa, where I passed so many delightful hours, the celebrated convention was signed, for which Sir Arthur Wellesley was so much censured." This offer was not accepted, and it is doubtful if ever again he volunteered to place his services at the disposal of that or any subsequent Government ; but he did once dabble unofficially in high politics, and actually endeavoured, by the unaided efforts of himself and his agents, to arrange a basis for a treaty of peace between France and England in the year 1797. The magnificence and audacity of the scheme, coupled with the sound business instinct underlying it, was thoroughly in accord with Beckford's character.

In the correspondence that has passed through the hands of the present writer the first hint of such a scheme is in the last paragraph of a letter discussing "Claudes and Japans," dated Fonthill, July 11, 1797, from Beckford to Nicholas Williams, his agent at Paris.

You know how to act in every particular, in every occurrence—The public are well primed and I cannot help flattering myself something might still be effected towards the accomplishment of the great object of our wishes.—Of one thing at least I am certain that it will not be your fault if our country is not benefited by my exertions at this momentous juncture.

The course of the negotiations may be traced from the following correspondence.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to JAMES GODDARD, Salisbury

DEAR SIR,

I am favor'd with your kind letter of the 25th ult^o and thank you for your observations about the House. I had written M^r Boucher on that subject previous to your letter and have given M^r White of Lincoln's Inn instructions to act with him in my behalf.

Your kind attentions to my family will not be forgotten, and your friendly wishes for my speedy return I am equally thankful for; that period I hope is not far distant, tho' the changes and commotions here, which you have no doubt heard of, will retard the progress I was making in the affairs with which I am entrusted. The late victory of the Patriots * I consider decisive, and the Republic now established on firmer ground than ever; therefore I hope, unanimity amongst themselves, and, arising out of that, Peace with their neighbours, may be looked for on more probable grounds than heretofore. You and our friends at Salisbury will I know be gratified to hear that whatever party prevail'd, M^r B. has ever been held in the same estimation and his interest remained undiminished, and tho' every other Englishman has been sent out of Paris, I remain with the most positive assurance of protection in secure possession of his property. This friendship has arisen from his known abilities and moderation, and the great encouragement he gave to Arts and Manufactories while he was in the Country, and might have been made use of on our side the water to the most beneficial purpose; but alas, personal enmity and individual prejudice have in this particular been much more prevalent than patriotism or sound policy, and the real good of the nation has been sacrificed to personal prejudices unworthy the Councils of a great Kingdom.

I beg you will present my thanks to the Mayor for his kind invitation, and assure him and all our friends that I very much regret I cannot have the pleasure to be of their party the 13th; I hope however the time is not far

* The *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor (September 4).

off when I shall see them all in perfect health, and that we shall have frequent opportunities to more firmly cement that friendship which it will be my pride to cultivate.

I desire you will present my particular Compliments to M^r Goddard and be assured of the most friendly regard of

yours very sincerely,

NICH^s WILLIAMS

PARIS, 9th Sept^r, 1797.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to RICHARD SAMUEL WHITE,
10 Lincoln's Inn, London

PARIS, Oct^r 10th, 1797.

MY DEAR SIR,

The inclosed letter to M^r Beckford being open will give you information of my situation; M^r Beckford will, I conclude, consult you upon that business, and if he should be at Fonthill I would recommend your going to him immediately. If he should determine on risking the sum spoken of, you will observe a mode must be thought of to supply me with it to a positive certainty, very different from that of the ideal Credit M^r Wildman obtained for me. The situation of the two countries and the laws existing in both make this a difficult matter to arrange without considerable danger; the most safe and certain method that I can see, is, for you to get from a Banker of known respectability in London six Bills drawn by him of 60 days date for a thousand pounds each on a perfect good house at Hambourg, these Bills must be payable to my order and you will send them by the Messenger to me; they will, you know, be of no value till I have indorsed them. The London Banker, will, of course, be careful to give advice to his Correspondent at Hambourg that the Bills, when presented, may not fail of being honored. In this way, it may very naturally be supposed that I am transacting some business at Hambourg where I want to make these payments, and the London Banker need not know the contrary. There will no trace ever appear that the Bills have been in this country nor would it be of any consequence in this manner if there

did : Tho' it will not be certain when those Bills are drawn they will be made use of, yet you will naturally be obliged to deposit the money to the Banker who draws them, or give him security for the amount ; and as circumstances will not admit of time to send the Bills to Hambourg for acceptance, care must be taken that the drawer in London is known in the Commercial world to be *perfectly good*. I have well considered and investigated this mode of Credit, and if M^r Beckford should determine to embark in the business I would strongly recommend from circumstances I am acquainted with, that this only should be the manner adopted. I am the more particular in detailing it, wishing, that if M^r Beckford should decide upon making the tryal, no deception or mistake in the Credit should prevent my pursuing it to the greatest advantage.

I beg you will exert yourself to hasten the return of this Messenger and remain,

D^r Sir,

very sincerely yours,

N. WILLIAMS.

Be so good as send me some News-papers by the messenger, and continue to send one every day to M^r Crowe at Dover for me, who I shall write to forward them to me. It is a very difficult matter to see an English News-paper here, which would sometimes be of great use to me.

ENCLOSURE

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to WILLIAM BECKFORD

PARIS, Oct^r 10th, 1797.

It is very distressing to me, My Dear Sir, to have been obliged to keep you so long in suspence since my letter to you of the 20th Ult^o. I have not yet been able to accomplish the great work I was in hopes to have done and explained to you in person before this time ; many unforeseen obstacles have fallen in the way which we then had no idea of. I can do a great deal here by money, but I cannot sport with your property without a solid prop for the Leaver I want to work by it. I have frequent interviews with the Minister of Foreign affairs ; and, had I

power, I could at this moment, as your Agent, make a peace that I think would be very satisfactory to England ; but it must be done in a very different stile to that of our Lord who is returned. They demanded of him as their Ultimatum a restitution of all conquests (made by the English since the commencement of the War) to France and its Allies, and as he had not power to comply with this, he was sent home to have the resolution of his Court, for which they have consented to wait till the 16th of the present month, and the French Negotiators will not be recalled from Lille till after that period.

The Minister of Foreign affairs has declared to me that they have the greatest repugnance to treat with Lord Malmsbury,* but would have as great pleasure to negotiate with you or L^d S^t Hellens † inviting you to this Negotiation, and expressing the aversion of the Nation to L^d Malmsbury ; he will also authenticate by plain language in those letters, that I have had frequent interviews with him upon the subject of peace, and that he has authorized me to inform the Government of England [of] the Preliminaries of a treaty, which they are ready to receive either you or L^d S^t Hellens to Negotiate upon immediately, and speedily conclude a peace on liberal and honorable terms to the both Nations. These Preliminaries are expressed in the paper N^o 2 inclosed, the original of which is now in the hands of the Minister, they cannot be given to me by him in writing ; but, as I have said before, he will express upon the letters which he will give me, that I have had conferences with him upon the subject of peace and am authorized to declare what the Preliminaries are, which they expect to be the Basis of the treaty ; and he will assure to me upon his honor that for one Month after my departure from Paris they shall not be receded from, nor will they in that time attend to any application, nor treat with any person through any other channel but your interest : I pushed hard to confine him to you only, but after a consultation at the Directory, that could not be complied with ; but as I am to bring those letters to England open, L^d S^t Hellens's need not appear till we are assured nothing can be done by yours. It is promised also that I shall very confidentially have inter-

* James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury.

† Alleyne Fitzherbert, Baron St. Helens.

views with the Directory before I go, who will confirm to me how desirous they are of treating with you in the most friendly manner.

As these transactions are, and must be kept perfectly secret, and are principally carried on by Secretaries and upper Clerks (the Government being *supposed* to know nothing of the *money* part of the business) these Gentlemen expect the immediate deposit of £6000 on the condition expressed in N^o 2, the greatest part of which will be divided amongst themselves and without which nothing can be done.

Tho' I consider it is hardly possible M^r Pitt will refuse to make peace on the terms here offered, yet £6000 is too large a sum of money for me to risk without your particular orders; nor is it, I find, in my power to do so without a Credit superior to that which I hold, as the letter of £3000 Credit which M^r Wildman obtained for me is worth nothing, the House refusing to advance a shilling upon it; nor can M^r Perregaux at present supply me with a quarter of it without the suspicion of being employed improperly by England as he is already denounced and watched very narrowly. I have therefore, my Dear Sir, thought it best to remain here and endeavour to keep this affair open till I can have your answer, and have dispatched your old Servant Collin, who you will be so good as to order to return to me with all possible haste the moment you have decided. It certainly is very likely that in this interval another person may arrive from England and the Negotiation may be renewed; but unless they can get into the channel that I am connected with and use the private means I have laid down, it is not likely they will be successful. The great point you know we have to procure is the appointment of yourself to this Embassy, which, I will undertake to say, may be concluded in a week after your arrival; and I hope our rulers will not oppose it after the expence and infinite pains you have taken and the advantages of Preliminaries you have obtained beyond those of their Negotiator. But if it should be illiberally refused to you, and L^d S^t Hellens appointed who, through the information you communicate, makes the peace, you will have done a Glorious service to your Country, which they *shall* not withhold from the knowledge of all Europe.

The information (if possible) at present the most

desirable on your side, is to know to a certainty if our Cabinet will make peace upon the terms offered to me, for if that was certain, there is no risk in advancing the £6000, as it will be repaid out of the Million, whoever may be Negotiator ; but I need not add how necessary caution and secrecy in this inquiry is, for, if the smallest knowledge was to reach them of our progress and by their spies they were to get at the persons with whom I am concerned, they would no doubt by intrigue snatch the business out of your hands and take the honour of it to themselves. It may not perhaps be imprudent at last to convey by a proper person to some of the Council, or by yourself if you think proper to the Duke of Portland, that by the connections I have made here through your interest, overtures have been made to me which, if they will authorize you to encourage, might be conducive to the most beneficial purpose ; anything of this sort will enable us to proceed on sure grounds. It is proper for me to add for your information (*but which must by no means transpire*) that the persons I am concerned with are the same who made peace with Portugal, and in the same way they have offered to proceed with me ; but the Portuguese Ambassador (after the manner of his country) having failed to perform some of his private engagements, they are more particular in binding me to so large a payment at first than would otherwise have been expected. Indeed I could not bring them to hear of anything less than Ten thousand pounds till a few days since, when they gave me their Ultimatum as above.

Your other concerns here are quite at a stand, and according to a new Law since the change of Government, must remain so for a fortnight yet to come, as every person, *without a possibility of distinction*, that was ever upon the list of Emigrants is placed upon it again, and good reasons must be shewn why they were erased, before it can be confirmed by the Directory ; according to this law a list of all persons in this situation is to be placed upon the Door of the principal Bureau of the Police every month, and in that space of time appeal must be made to the Directory expressing the reasons which induced the Department to make the erasure. The former part of this process we have already gone through and nothing remains but the time which the form requires to complet

it: till then no effectual requisition can be made of the property we have not yet got possession of.

A greater rogue than Auguste I believe is not upon the face of the earth, he will cheat you of everything if he can, and nothing but force, I see, will bring him to any sort of reason. He takes advantage of the present situation of affairs, but I am assured the time is not far off when I shall be able to compel this rascal to make restitution.

I have had the favor of your letter of the 17th Ult^o. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than the account of your reception at Salisbury which I have heard of from several quarters. The disposition of the Still's I am perfectly well acquainted with; but I am rejoiced that M^r Williams's attention on that day gave you satisfaction.—

M^r Perregaux has undertaken to get good wine for you of the sorts you mention, which will be sent to England at the same time he is sending home to L^d Malmsbury.

Inclosed you will receive a letter from Doctor Scholl. It was accompanied by one to me equally curious. He must be intirely void of judgement or observation to send such Letters by the post into France at this moment more dangerous, because more investigated in this particular, than any period heretofore. His remarks both in your letter and mine regarding my long stay in France, are equally happy with his other observations, and proves him a man of profound knowledge and penetration; the only information I was desirous of obtaining from him was of the Wine he had spoken to you of, and how to get the Accoustic he had recommended to assist D^r Lettice's hearing; both of which, notwithstanding my letter was written to him in good French, he has been totally deficient in.

My health is by no means good. I have constant headache and pain in the Stomach, occasioned no doubt by uneasiness of mind and little exercise. I have been so much employed for this nearly a week past that I have not been outside the door. Suppose the great affair even out of question, you will easily judge of my feelings, when, after all my difficulties about your other concerns was as I thought just concluded satisfactorily, a Revolution takes place, compleatly overturns everything I had done, and

leaves me, according to the decrees which are past, very nearly in the same situation I was three months ago ; nay, in some respects worse ; for every person that was ever upon the list of Em^s [Emigrants] must be placed upon it again ; and, however unjust this may be, nothing but sound reason supported by the strongest interest can at present remove a single name. This I am assured we have, and that all will be compleated satisfactorily as soon as the forms will permit.

I sincerely hope the English Government will wisely listen to reason and incline to peace, for they may be assured this Government was never so strong and active as at this moment ; and tho' their Finances are not in the best situation, their Troops are in the highest spirits, and their preparations for the commencement of hostilities are dreadfully formidable. Great indeed would be the merit and praise due to that man who could avert from mankind the horrid devastation that is ready to overspread the face of Europe.

I am,

My dear Sir,

with sincere attachment,

your obliged Hble Servant,

NICH^s WILLIAMS

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to WILLIAM BECKFORD

MY DEAR SIR,

I hope the Letters I forwarded to you a few days since by a person going to England, will have reached you in due course before you receive this ; they will give you the fullest information possible of your affairs here, which cannot be changed for the better, till I have the pleasure of hearing from you.

The report of the Lawyers whom I consulted regarding Auguste, is, that we can do nothing by him till the Erasement is compleatly confirmed, when there will be no difficulty of constraining him to embursement.

I have understood today that all expectation of a peaceable nature thro' the former channel of Negotiation is totally at an end nor does any hope of that description now remain but through the mediation you are acquainted

with. According to the former, I have reason to believe they will persevere in having the full restitution they have demanded ; but, by the latter, I can venture to say, still better terms may be obtained than those you are already informed of. Had I power at this moment I am sensible I could open a communication of a most desirable nature, for they are in reality yet peaceably inclined ; but the preparations are so formidable and their determination so desperate, that I believe a very short period will banish the Olive branch from their consideration. From every motive that ought to have possession of the breast of an Englishman, I sincerely pray that our Cabinet will not risk the destruction of what I conceive to be the most happy Constitution, on the uncertain termination of another Campaign.

I am well acquainted, my Dear Sir, no one will see with more just apprehension than yourself the portentous cloud that at this moment overspreads the political horizon of Europe ; and was your power equal to your will it would soon be dispersed by the sunshine of your benevolence. I pray to God our Governors may yet listen to reason, and accept of your interposition, which I am fully convinced would at this moment produce the most beneficial consequences.

I need not tell you what anxiety I shall feel till I can hear from you as every hour is big with events but will assure you, My Dear Sir, I shall ever remain with the most sincere Attachment

Your much obliged

Humble Servant,

[NICHOL^S WILLIAMS.]

PARIS, Oct^r 12th, 1797.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to WILLIAM BECKFORD

PARIS, in the TEMPLE, Oct^r 22^d, 1797.

Distressing as my situation is at present, My Dear Sir, it is very considerably aggravated by a reflection of the uneasiness the receipt of this letter will give you. But as I conceive it is possible the account of my Arrestation may reach England by the News-papers or that you may hear of it by some other channel, I thought it best to give you

the information myself, lest it might come to you with a worse aspect than it really merits.

Previous to the writing of my last letters of the 10th and 12th I had been informed I was denounced as an Agent of the English Government who came here to distribute money and otherwise encourage a Counter-Revolution. As I had no concern with anything of this nature, and knowing no words nor actions of mine here had any tendency of this sort, I paid very little attention to it, believing the connections I had and the circumspection of my conduct would, if an examination was to take place, be a sufficient protection against the attempt of any ill designing persons ; nor can I now have any doubt, but after a proper investigation, justice will be done me and I shall be soon at liberty.

I have been already here five days, and my papers have been in the possession of the Police the same time, the examination of which does not give me the least apprehension, for I am confident nothing will be found in them that can be construed to have any interference with the Government.

As I have not been yet examined, my confinement is very strict, no person but Bertie is suffered to have communication with me ; nor can I, according to the rigid measures of the present moment, expect release from any interest or event but the admitted proof of my Innocence. And although I have no apprehension but this will soon appear, yet a reflection on the injustice I have already experienced, makes me admit the possibility of the contrary. In that case, my Dear Sir, I am sure I can with confidence rely on your goodness for the protection of a family whose situation otherwise must be truly miserable. Professions now are useless, but I may say, there is not one of them, so far as its imagination extends, who is not as much attached to you as I am.

I have written M^{rs} Williams I have been imprisoned, but am again at liberty. I shall be much obliged by your encouraging her in this belief, as I am afraid the contrary idea would almost be fatal to her ; and I hope many days will not elapse before I shall be able to confirm to you the reality of it.

I am told the Room I am confined in is the same the late unfortunate King occupied. Sir S. Smith is above

me ; I hear him frequently, and we see each other in the yard, but can have no communication together. Strong Bolts and Iron Bars are not the most agreeable objects, but as Bertie is permitted to go in and out, I am as well off as can be expected in a situation of this sort.

I remain, My Dear Sir,
with most sincere attachment,
your very obliged Hble Servant,
NICH : WILLIAMS.

I am informed I was denounced by two different persons. I have great suspicion one is M^r Auguste ; and I think I am not mistaken when I conclude the other to be M^r Stoehe, who I have no doubt you will remember fled from England some time since to avoid the Attorney-General—I had the honor to see this Gentleman once, who, I learn, was offended because I did not ask him to dine with me.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to WILLIAM BECKFORD

PARIS, HOTEL D'HARCOURT, Nov^r 1st, 1797.

I hasten, My Dear Sir, to remove the anxiety my letter from the Tower of the Temple of the 22^d October, has, I am sensible, occasioned you. I was an inhabitant of that dreary mansion twelve days while my papers were translated, I then went through a very close examination at the Police and was acquitted, with these words from the Judge :—" We have thought it necessary, from a knowledge of the enmity your Government bear us, to examine into the true motives of your residence in our country ; and we are perfectly convinced by your papers and other inquiries, that, tho' M^r Beckford and yourself are Patriots of your own country, you are not private enemies to this, and by every thing we can discover you have either written or said regarding public affairs, you have shewn you have had no view but a wish of being instrumental in restoring the blessing of peace to the two Nations. We therefore are sorry for the confinement you have suffered, and you are again at liberty to pursue the concerns that brought you to France." Thus you see, My Dear Sir, I

have passed through a very severe tryal without dishonour either to you or myself.

I am now excessively anxious to hear from you in reply to my letters of the 10th & 12th Ult°. I sincerely pray they may have reached you without accident, as I consider you will be thereby in possession of information that may lead you to great exertions towards restoring a general peace and happiness to Europe.

I shall again enter into your business, which was the occasion of my coming to this country; and, as the number of my friends are rather increased than lessened by the ordeal I have gone through, I hope I shall yet make a successful termination of my mission and soon return, to my country, to you, and to my family.

I remain,

My Dear Sir,

with most sincere attachment,
your obliged Hble Ser^t,

[N. WILLIAMS.]

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

It is now, My Dear Sir, near two months since I have had the pleasure of hearing from you, the reason of which I cannot imagine; I have written you in that time six letters, some of them I conceive of more than ordinary import to our Nation; one in particular of the 10th October I sent by your old servant Collin, and it was full of that sort of information which I warmly hoped would have enabled you to have been very instrumental in restoring the blessing of peace to our country. I know they were all safely sent from Calais and I have reason to believe they were as safely landed at Dover; if you have not received them, I am at a loss to know what sort of policy could induce the Post-Office or Government to withhold them from you; but if that should be the case, I now sincerely hope they will benefit by the information, and embrace the opportunity therein pointed out, to avert the dreadful calamity which I fear will otherwise very shortly be at their door. It cannot be doubted that the peace with the Emperor will enable the enemy to seriously

menace us with, if not effect, the worst of evils ; and I know they are determined to collect their utmost force for one decisive enterprise. What, indeed, may not be expected from an army so numerous, and accustomed to victory, and whose leaders never suffer the probable loss of men to deter them from any project they have once resolved upon ; and notwithstanding the superiority of our Fleets we have seen the possibility of evading their diligence.

By the deprivation of communication, I have suffered, with you, with my family and my other friends, I conclude all my letters are subject to public investigation : be it so, however hurtful this is to my feelings I must bear it, and, I am somewhat consoled by the reflection that I have under your influence, in that case, conveyed much positive and useful intelligence that might have been depended upon and converted to the best of purposes.

I yet have pride that I am an Englishman, and a comparison of our Constitution with that of others increases my partiality. You know I am as little subject to alarm as any man, yet I seriously fear our Ministers are going too far, and if the same system is persisted in, dreadful I am persuaded will be the overthrow : with this conviction, how much do I deplore that illiberal and unjust prejudice by which you are deprived the power of rendering those essential services to your country which I am sensible cannot be accomplished in that degree by any other man.

You will easily conceive, my Dear Sir, how distressing my situation has been for some time ; the changes that have taken place here, the anxiety of hearing from you and the difficulty of conveying that sort of information which I hoped would be beneficial, without incurring censure from one side or the other, have been truly perplexing. I have undergone a severe scrutiny on this side without dishonour ; and I have too high opinion of the equitable justice of my country to doubt their approbation of my conduct if ever it should be thought proper to bring it before them.

Your private affairs here are now in that train which cannot be hastened by any exertion in my power, and it will yet be five or six weeks before a final settlement can be made. I therefore only wait to hear from you, when,

if you communicate nothing to the contrary, I shall immediately return.

I remain, My Dear Sir,
 with the sincerest attachment,
 your obliged Hble Ser^t
 [N. WILLIAMS.]

Nov^r 12th, 1797
 [PARIS]

G. H. NAGEL to NICHOLAS WILLIAMS, at Calais

PARIS, 17th Nov^r, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

I received Your esteemed favour of the 14th instant, which informs me of Your safe arrival at Calais and of Your being well.

I have only to answer on Your Remarks, that You have not been deceived in the Business You know of. The Conditions proposed are sincere, and every thing should have soon been agreed, if it had been in Your power to finish. This is still the case; though one's friend, who returns You his Compliments, assured me again to day, that he would answer for almost every consequence, provided You hasten Yourself to get the other side of the water, in order to obtain those pieces, with which You did flatter Yourself before You left Paris. I beseech You therefore to make every haste possible; then as long as there is no appearance and still less certitude that You will be enabled to make real proposals, You cannot pretend that the offers, which could be made from other hands, shall absolutely be refused here. However I can assure You, that whatever they may have told You about a Messenger from Leg [? England] no real negociation have yet begun.

As to us and all those who are, and who have been concerned in this affair, You may depend that everything shall and will be done, which can contribute to make Your return probable before long, and we shall do everything possible, in order that no other but You shall have the merit to conclude a final arrangement.

I am Dear Sir,
 Mr Dubois presents You Yours sincerely
 his compliments and hopes G. H. NAGEL.
 You will have received the Letters he brought over and

sent to You at Calais; he delivered the books to M^r Perregaux, but did not write You by fear to compromise You.

Beckford evidently took a keen interest in his agent's attempts to forward these negotiations for peace, and the neglect of which Williams speaks was probably due, not to the fact that he did not write, but that the correspondence coming from Paris through the ordinary channels may have been delayed by the censor. Williams's efforts at this time had been so far crowned with success that he was able to send his employer a "Note of the Terms" that would be acceptable to France as offering a basis for negotiation.

The Cape of Good Hope to be ceded to the English, who are to continue to hold Gibraltar and all other possessions they had before the War, and the French to have no interference with the limitation of their Navy nor Armies.

England to restore to the French and their Allies (Spain and Holland) every other *Territorial* conquest it has made in the present war. France will immediately receive from England an Ambassador, who is to consider these as the Preliminaries, and who will arrange and settle with a Negotiator on this side, every difficulty that may arise, and endeavour to conclude between the Nations, a Treaty of Amity and Friendship.—

Upon receipt of this "Note" Beckford thought the matter sufficiently far advanced for him to approach the Duke of Portland. Why he should have written to the Duke, who was at the Home Office, rather than the Foreign Secretary, can only be explained on the assumption that he was personally acquainted with the former.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE DUKE OF PORTLAND

GROSVENOR SQUARE, [LONDON],
Wednesday, November 28th, 1797.

MY LORD,

Having, by a channel to myself perfectly authentic, been given to understand, that the French Government, so lately as the 9th and 12th October, were disposed to open a new Negotiation for Peace, and finding from the Declaration of our Government, made public just after the time my Intelligence was *allowed* to reach me, that the Basis, on which the French offered to commence another Treaty, was much more advantageous for Eng^{ld} than that of the last Negotiation, and such a one as would probably be thought honourable by our Country at large, I hastened to Town, on the general appearance of the Declaration, in order to impart to his Majesty's Ministry the Communications which I possess. But no sooner had I, on my arrival, finished a Letter, in which I meant to convey them than I received an Account dated the 22^d Ult :, from Mr. Williams, my Agent at Paris, thro' whose hands had passed the Communications alluded to, that his Papers were seized and himself, upon some secret and false accusation, was put under Confinement by Order of the French Government.—Yesterday, my Lord, in a Letter from Paris of the 1st Inst: he acquaints me, that, as soon as his Papers had been translated and investigated, and he himself had undergone a close Examination, he was very honourably acquitted of the Charges invented against him, and immediately set at Liberty with permission to prosecute the Concerns, which had brought him to France.

As there is the strongest reason to believe, that Copies of all that has been communicated to me, relatively to the Basis for a new Treaty, had appeared amongst his papers, and as he mentions not the slightest disavowal, on the part of the French Government, of anything which had passed through his Hands of a public Concern, I think it my Duty, without further Delay, to communicate to your Grace the new Basis or preliminary Terms confidentially proposed thro' my Agent.

They are precisely as follows—

“That England shall remain in the possession of the

Cape of Good Hope and Gibraltar and be undisturbed in the Limitation of her Fleets and Armies, on consideration that England gives up all other Territorial Conquests, made in the present War, to France and her Allies."

I find Encouragement, moreover, held out in my papers, that though the preliminaries above are to be considered as the Basis of the Treaty, the French Minister will upon certain conditions, give Hopes, that something more favourable will be complied with.

I am in possession of some other Circumstances of very considerable moment, closely connected with the above Statement, which, I ask the Honour of a personal Interview with your Grace, in order to communicate.

As it appears from various Quarters, that M^r Williams, during a residence of Five Months at Paris, has, with the exception of a few Days which false Suspicions had clouded, conducted himself in a manner to obtain extraordinary Consideration, Esteem and Confidence with the Directory, with two successive Ministers of foreign Affairs and several Members of the Councils, and that no Englishman in France has for some time been treated with any comparable Degree of Privilege or Respect, I submit it to your Grace and his Majesty's Ministers, whether, all Circumstances considered, his Services may not be rendered useful to Government in the present awful Crisis. To obtain all the requisite Authenticity to the Basis above stated, should his Majesty's Ministers think it expedient to take any steps, upon my Communication, towards a new Treaty, it only remains, that they give their sanction to a Deposit of six thousand pounds, with certain persons at Paris, connected with the French Government. I am so intirely convinced of the Sincerity of these Overtures, that I am ready, without Delay and at my own risk, if any can be supposed, to advance the Deposit in question with the consent of our Government formally and explicitly given.

I have the Honour

&c. &c. &c. . . .

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

His Grace
The Duke of Portland.

Beckford's suggestion was not cavalierly dismissed, for, as will be seen from the second of the "Questions to

Council" printed below, the matter was put before Pitt, presumably by the Duke of Portland. Indeed, these "Minutes for Recollection," drawn up by Beckford with his own hand, suggest that the ministers desired further information, or were at least willing to consider it.

MINUTES FOR RECOLLECTION

1. The Minister's Note—8th Vendémiaire i.e. 29th Sep^r.
2. Mr. Williams's No 2 of Oct 5th, together with all Nagel's Letters and Mr. Beckford's, to the Duke of Portland and M^r Pitt.
3. The Order of shutting M^r W. up at the Temple.
4. Minister's Office with Lord M.—Correspondence.
5. Sight of M^r W's Papers relative to Correspondence with M^r Beckford on the Overtures, &c., by the Police at Paris without their disclaiming anything which appear'd in them on that Subject of *Peace*.
6. The honourable Declaration in M^r W's favour when liberated from the Temple.
7. The different Visits of M^r W. to the Minister—The confidential Conversation with him.
8. Access to the Minister allowed whenever he should judge necessary to demand it.
9. The Permission for M^r W's continuing in Paris and going anywhere he pleased when all other Englishmen were obliged to be at ten Leagues Distance.
10. His continual Communication and Intercourse with the first and most confidential Secretary of the Minister and some of those of the Directory.
11. His personal Acquaintance with Albert Bartlemy and Thevellraye &c. The Confidence of the Former and great Civilities of the latter.
12. Mr. W. must authenticate the Disposition of France to Peace up to the 17th—it having been declared to have continued so long at least in the Letter to Lord Thurlow.

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL

1. Can the Statement, if published, implicate Mr. B—with the Fr : Corresp : Bill ? or any other Law ?
2. Will not the Duke of P's and M^r Pitt's having corresponded with M^r Beckford on the subject of the Letters

from France, as they related to Peace, prevent their taking any steps against him, if the above Bill would otherwise authorize them? not to mention their passport for M^r Williams' going to France.

3. Is not their conduct so far a Sanction to M^r B's and M^r Williams' Proceedings?

4. Can the Correspondence with France between M^r W. and certain Secretaries be Safely Continued without Ministerial Sanction and should it inform the Continuance of the same good disposition to negotiate?

At this time Nicholas Williams came to London, probably summoned by Beckford so as to be at hand if first-hand evidence of the conversation of the French ministers should be required by the Duke of Portland or Pitt. Williams apparently arranged with Nagel to represent him in his absence.

G. H. NAGEL, at Paris, to NICHOLAS WILLIAMS, at
MR. BECKFORD'S, Grosvenor Square, London

PARIS, 1st. Decbr 1797.

D^r SIR,

I have just now received Your esteemed favour of the 28th Ult^o, and have not had time to see the Parties. I can however assure You the matter is still open as when You was here, but You know the conditions, on which You was to have the papers You ask for, and which were promised to You: these not being fulfilled, they cannot be sent You at present. I would, therefore, advise Your sounding the parties with You, and if you see a probability of Success, procure immediately the means of fulfilling Your Engagement; and I will answer for it that on Your return here, You shall be furnished with every paper necessary to convince the Parties with You [of] the reality of the transaction. I repeat to You that the parties here would be glad to see You again to settle this business, and if any other person should be appointed by Your Principals, it would be well, You accompanied him. You shall soon hear from me again, and in expectation of Your speedy

answer with Your sentiments, and wishing You all success,
I remain truly,

D^r Sir,

Mr Hofmann received y^r
Letter and the books, he
will leave this in a fortnight.

Your very hble Sth

G. H. NAGEL.

With the following letter the correspondence concluded.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS, at London, to WILLIAM BECK-
FORD, at Fonthill

MY DEAR SIR,

Inclosed I send you a copy of a note I received from Mr Pitt last evening, by which you will see they are resolved to have no communication upon this subject and are undoubtedly obstinately bent on carrying on the War till they are compleatly blown up. The overtures that have been made to Government through you are talked very generally of, and on the subject of the Assessed Taxes there seems to be but one opinion, that they will create the greatest disturbance and cannot be collected.

As I have received this note from Mr Pitt I conceive it likely you will alter the Paragraph sent me for the papers by Doctor Lettice; though I have but a very slight opinion of the utility of anything that can be put into the papers upon this subject at present and believe that the disorders a public knowledge of the truth might occasion would lead to that violence which might ultimately be as injurious to you as any one, yet I think the observations that have lately been made in several of the papers, as well as one in the *Times* of today, calls for some sort of reply couched in careful but positive terms; and I think if D^r Lettice was to get this done through the channel of Mr Ja^s Goddard (who is very warm upon the subject and may be trusted) it will find its way better than through any method I can take here, he has told me he has no difficulty with any of the Editors—

As soon as this bustle of St Paul's is over (for nothing is to be done in any way till then) I shall endeavour to see Mr Baldwin, converse with others here as much as I can, and try to bring Mr Wyatt with me to Fonthill as

soon as possible ; but as I am told he cannot quit London sooner than Thursday or Friday I shall hope to hear from you any other determination you may make.—

I remain, My Dear Sir,
with the sincerest attachment,
your obliged Hble Ser^t

GROSVENOR SQ.,
Dec^r 18th, 1797.

NICH^s WILLIAMS.

ENCLOSURE

WILLIAM PITT to NICHOLAS WILLIAMS

DOWNING STREET,
Dec^r 17th, 1797.

M^r Pitt presents his compliments to M^r Williams. He has received his Note inclosing a letter from M^r Beckford, but as he does not think any advantage likely to arise from the Communication proposed, He will not give M^r Williams the trouble of calling on him ; and begs the favour of him to convey the Contents of this Note to M^r Beckford.—

As a postscript to the correspondence concerning these abortive negotiations may be given a letter from Beckford's "sister."

MRS. ELIZABETH HERVEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD

ACTON, Dec. 22, 1797.

The deplorable state of the Nation seems a matter of great indifference to them [the Ministers], since they obstinately reject all pacific propositions. Were they alone to suffer by this conduct, I should rejoice at their folly and wickedness, but alas ! it will most probably involve the whole Nation in ruin. Experience ought to have taught them, that, however triumphant we may be at Sea, we can do nothing by Land, and a tedious defensive War cannot fail of totally destroying our shaken Finances, for the plausible statement of the affairs of the Bank cannot disguise the fatal Truth. Shortly, I fear, it will burst on the world, and then these furious advocates of War will be the first Victims of an enraged, deluded

and ruined People. It would, however, give me some comfort to hear, that you who have acted so nobly, wisely, and generously on this occasion, were likely to receive more solid tokens of acknowledgment, than mere words. If they had been wise, they should at least have tried to pacify your displeasure, and to prevent the disagreeable discoveries you have in your power to make. They might have done this, by candidly stating their objections to an Immediate Peace, giving you some hints of their future plans, requesting your assistance at a future, and in their opinion more convenient moment; and thus to prove their sense of your patriotic behaviour, and the important service you were ready to do them, bestow upon you such a mark of favour as you could with honour have accepted. But as they never act as they ought to do on any occasion, there is no use in saying more about them. How interesting it must be to hear Williams's relation of the state of Paris! and of all the extraordinary and important events which he has witnessed during his residence there! I long to hear of his arrival.

CHAPTER XI

FONTHILL ABBEY

THE Fonthill House, commonly supposed to have been designed by Inigo Jones, which Alderman Beckford purchased, had been for generations the home of the Mervyns, with whom the new proprietor claimed kindred through his wife. The mansion was burnt down in 1755, and when the news was told to the Alderman, he replied, with delightful calmness: "Well, we must build it up again." The new structure erected on the site was one of the finest in England: the main building had four stories, with wings of two stories each, connected by corridors of the fine freestone found on the estate; and there was a bold portico entrance upon a rustic basement, having two flights of steps to the entrance hall, which was one of the largest in the kingdom, being eighty-five feet by thirty-eight broad, vaulted, and supported by strong stone piers. The apartments were numerous and well proportioned, and furnished in the most costly style, all having valuable marbles, statuary, pictures, and plate; the entire contents of one large room had been imported from the east. The arrangement of the valuable works of art before the younger Beckford came to live there permanently, however, apparently left much to be desired. "Today we have been to see Mr. Beckford's Fonthill," the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen wrote to Mrs. Delany, on September 25, 1783, "*where you wou'd have been provok'd to see fine Titians pell mell with daubings of Capali; or, in sea phrase,*

‘alongside of them,’ the mixture of good and bad pictures *was hideous.*”*

It has already been stated that the younger Beckford spent some years of his minority at Fonthill, and that the coming-of-age festivities were held there; but the place does not seem to have attracted him in those days, for it did not occur to him to settle there until, at the age of thirty-four, he began to weary of incessant travel. His intention to live at Fonthill is first indicated in a letter to his architect.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to JAMES WYATT

LISBON, 10th April, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

Relying upon the very obliging attention you have ever shown me, I trouble you with the enclosed plan, and should esteem it a particular favour if you would take it into your immediate consideration and, if possible, return a sketch by the first mail.

My appetite for humouring St. Anthony, you see, is still so keen that I cannot live without a little tid-bit of a sanctuary to stay my stomach till the moment arrives when, by the permission of Providence and Mr. Wildman, I may carry your magnificent plan for the Chapel upon Stop’s Beacon into execution.

My projects here are more confined. I want a new oratory, a sort of tabernacle with curtains and lamps and two candelabra and 6 altar candlesticks. All these holy implements may be made in Portugal at a very trifling expense—the lamps of bronze with the candelabra of wood—provided you will settle the proportion and design. As I have some beautiful straw-coloured silk ready, I have thought of hanging round the whole room with curtains of these materials. The recess, I rather think, should be of another colour, perhaps lilac; but upon this also I beg your advice.

You will receive exact dimensions of the space allotted for this good work, beyond which I would not wish to

* “Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany,” Second Series, vol. iii. p. 141.



FONTHILL ABBEY—VIEW OF THE WEST AND SOUTH FRONTS
JOHN RUTTER

stretch an inch—Mr. Wildman having inspired me with such a terror of laying out money and such an apprehension of ruin, that I have constantly the fear of 600,000 emancipated, black, yellow, and mezzotint French slaves before my eyes. With so hopeless an alarm I cannot venture to serve St. Anthony so splendidly as I should wish. But good taste is much cheaper than bad when once the size and dimensions are settled; and, therefore, with the purest conscience I apply for your assistance.

It will give me great satisfaction to learn from yourself that you are well and happy in the turn which English politics seem to have taken.

Shortly after this letter was written, Beckford came to England, and went to stay at his country seat, where almost at once he became on bad terms with his neighbours. Here was a millionaire country gentleman, who showed no inclination to be sociable, who did not entertain or accept invitations to the entertainments of others, but actually preferred books and pictures to dinners and balls! This the worthy squires, who had not an idea beyond horses and dogs, food and drink, and farming, could not understand: but they were soon to realise that in their midst was a man, who not only would not subscribe to the hunt, but forbade them to ride over his estates! It was, of course, easy enough to disregard this injunction, and they laughed as they did so, for they could not see how Beckford could enforce his wish. They reckoned without their host, however. Beckford did not laugh: he gave orders that a wall twelve feet high should be built within a year to encircle his lands, a wall seven or eight miles in extent; and he went abroad while this was being done. "Some people say that I built the wall before I began the house, to cut myself wholly off from mankind. Why, I had always one, sometimes two, hundred workmen with me. I built the wall because I would not have my grounds intruded upon by sportsmen. In vain were they warned off. Your country gentlemen

will transport a pauper for taking a few berries from a hedge, which they will break down without ceremony. They will take no denial when they go hunting in their red jackets, to exerce to death a poor hare. I found remonstrances vain, so I built the wall to exclude them. I never suffer an animal to be killed, but through necessity. Early in life I gave up shooting because I consider we have no right to murder animals for sport. I am fond of animals. The birds in the plantations of Fonthill seemed to know me—they continued their songs as I rode close to them—the very hares grew bold. It is exactly what I wished.”

Beckford's protest was effectual: not the most gallant horseman nor the most fiery steed can take a twelve foot wall; but the relations that from the first had been strained, now became those of declared enmity on the part of the neighbouring gentry. Nothing apparently was too bad to be said of the man who interfered with sport, the old slanders were revived, and when Beckford returned to Fonthill, the most damaging statements were circulated concerning his mode of life, which was represented as in the highest degree extravagant and vicious. The accounts of his seclusion have, owing to these malicious reports, been grossly exaggerated, and some of the accusations have been repeated to this day. It is, however, true that when Beckford was building the Abbey he would not permit the intrusion of curious strangers, and this rule he was compelled to make by the interest excited by his operations, which brought him every day a trayful of “applications to view.”

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE HONBLE. COLONEL MURRAY

SIR,

I owe you some Apology for not having immediately answered your very polite Letter. Being absent at the Time in a distant part of this place I was obliged to delay it.

The great number of Persons generally employed upon my Grounds makes the vigorous Observance of Rules imposed upon them absolutely necessary. I cannot therefore retract the Order I have given for the dismissal of the Men concerned in this violation of their Duty.

You, Sir, placed in a distinguished Post in the Army, cannot be but peculiarly aware of the Value and Necessity of strict Discipline, and must, of course, be convinced that Order cannot possibly be preserved among the lower Classes but by the severest requisition of their Duty and exemplary marks of displeasure upon the infringement.

I am sorry to add that this Neighbourhood, notwithstanding all my Efforts in its behalf, furnishes such repeated instances of neglect and irregularity, that I find myself compelled by these disagreeable circumstances to refuse a request, so full of Humanity, and which would otherwise have been irresistible.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your Obedt. & very Humble Servant,

FONTHILL HOUSE,

Sept. 27th, 1800.

W. BECKFORD.

Though Beckford would not admit strangers within his gates, on the other hand he never refused the application of any one of whom he had the slightest knowledge; but he resolutely—and can it be denied, wisely?—declined to tax his time merely to gratify idle curiosity—an idle curiosity, too, that was actually more often aroused in connection with himself than with the Abbey. Many were the attempts surreptitiously to effect an entrance; sometimes a spy would get into the grounds in the guise of a workman, and once a gentleman contrived to slip in by the great gate. This last exploit has served as a peg for many stories. It has been said that the stranger, mistaking Beckford for a gardener, addressed him; that Beckford showed him the grounds; and then, declaring his identity, invited him to remain to dinner; and retiring after the repast, sent a servant to say: “Mr. Beckford ordered me to present his compliments to you, Sir, and I am to say that as you found your way into Fonthill

Abbey without assistance, you may find your way out again as best you can ; and he hopes you will take care to avoid the bloodhounds that are let loose in the gardens every night. I wish you good evening. No, thank you, Sir, Mr. Beckford does not allow vails." It is a good story and has been told by many writers. Hazlitt alluded to it in "The Picture Galleries of England" (1824), and more than half a century later Mr. W. P. Frith mentions it in his "Autobiography" as happening to a cousin of his—but that cousin was evidently unable to resist the temptation to improve upon the real version, which happily has been told by Beckford. "I will tell you the origin of that story," he said one day to Cyrus Redding. "Vulgar curiosity was so excited by the edifice I was constructing, but more by the falsehoods told of myself, that even 'gentlemen' disguised themselves in workmen's dresses, and got in to see what was doing. It was not pleasant, being among the workmen continually, to be looked in the face all day long by intrusive people who had no business there. I never refused strangers at proper seasons the satisfaction of their curiosity. The circumstance to which you allude has foundation in fact. I was coming out of the hall, going towards the plantations, when a stranger addressed me. 'Can I see Fonthill?'—'It is not shown.'—'Might I see the gardens then? You can show them, I dare say?'—I thought I would follow out the joke, as the stranger was of gentlemanly address. I led him into the garden, showed him the grounds, and lastly took him to the house. Here, I imagine, he began to suspect I was not what I pretended. I know not to this day who he was—but I thought him one of the pleasantest men I had ever conversed with—deeply read, sensible, and perfectly well-bred. When I had shown him the principal apartments, I knew that dinner was serving up. I begged him to walk with me into a room he had not seen, and instantly led the way to the dinner-table, telling him of his mistake, of which there was by this time but

little need. I would take no denial; he dined with me. We conversed on a variety of subjects—he was at home in all. I rang for a servant, as it was dark, thanking him for his society. I asked if he had any conveyance. He only expressed a wish to be shown the way to the park gates. We parted, and I never saw him more. As to my treating one of the most agreeable strangers I ever saw in my life with rudeness—one who had eaten my salt—it was impossible. I hope I am a gentleman.”

Once, however, Beckford did take advantage of his reputation for eccentricity, when he was visited by a lady who desired him for a son-in-law. “I once shut myself up at Fonthill to be out of the way of a lady—an ungallant thing, I allow, to any lady on earth but her with whom it occurred. You must well remember the late Duchess of Gordon, as she was the continual talk of the town for her curious ways. I could have served no other lady so, I hope—I never enjoyed a joke so much,” he confided to Redding. “At that time everybody talked of Mr. Beckford’s enormous wealth—everything about me was exaggerated proportionately. I was in consequence a capital bait for the Duchess’s bite—so she thought; I thought differently. She had been told that even a dog-kennel at Fonthill was a palace—my house a Potosi. What more upon earth could be desired by a managing mother for a daughter? I might have been aged and impotent—no matter, such is fashion’s philosophy. I got a hint of her intentions to surprise me with her hard face at Fonthill—a sight I could gladly dispense with. I determined not to see her. I resolved to give her a lesson. Fonthill was put in order for her reception, with everything I could desire to receive her magnificently—not only to receive her, but to turn the tables on her for the presumption she had that I was to become the plaything of her purposes. . . . My arrangements being made, I ordered my major-domo to say, on the Duchess’s arrival, that it was unfortunate—everything being arranged for

her Grace's reception, Mr. Beckford had shut himself up on a sudden, a way he had at times, and that it was more than his place was worth to disturb him, as his master only appeared when he pleased, forbidding interruption, even if the King came to Fonthill. I had just received a new stock of books, and had them removed to the room of which I had taken possession. The Duchess conducted herself with great equanimity, and seemed much surprised and gratified at what she saw, and the mode of her reception—just as I desired she should be. When she got up in the morning her first question was, 'Do you think Mr. Beckford will be visible to-day?' 'I cannot inform your Grace—Mr. Beckford's movements are so very uncertain—it is possible. Would your Grace take an airing in the Park?—a walk in the gardens?' Everything which Fonthill could supply was made the most of, whetting her appetite to her purpose still more. My master of the ceremonies to the Duchess did not know what to make of his master, the Duchess, or his own position. 'Perhaps Mr. Beckford will be visible to-morrow?' was the Duchess's daily consolation. To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow came and went—no Mr. Beckford! I read on, determined not to see her. Was it not serving right such a woman as she was? She could not play the speculator with me." The Duchess of Gordon departed after seven or eight days, and though we may be sure she did not talk of her experiences at Fonthill, something of the truth leaked out, and no match-making mother ever again troubled Beckford.

In 1796 Beckford came again to England, and went at once to Fonthill House, taking with him Dr. Errhart, his physician, the Chevalier Gregario Franchi, a musician, who was to act as his major-domo, and the Abbé Maquin, artist, *littérateur*, and student of heraldry, who had for some time been his private secretary. Soon after his return, he gave instructions to James Wyatt to prepare a design for an ornamental building that should have the appear-

ance of a convent, be partly in ruins, and yet contain some weather-proof apartments which would afford shelter from sun or rain. At this time there is no reason to believe that Beckford had any thought of erecting a new residence : he was first induced to extend his operations by a desire to find employment for the labourers in the vicinity of Fonthill.

Finding on my return from the Continent an extensive neighbourhood round me in Wiltshire almost starving and considerably disaffected, under the consequences of the present War (he wrote to Charles Cooper in 1798), I commenced, principally from a Motive of furnishing Employment for some hundreds of poor Families, Works of such Magnitude and Extent as have engaged and will continue to engage all [my] ready money.

Beckford refers also to this motive in the following letter, in which also a glimpse is afforded of his benefactions.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* HIS MOTHER

FONTHILL, 29th Nov., 1796.

You are much mistaken, my dear Mother, in supposing the approach of Winter to have relaxed the vigour of my proceedings at Fonthill. Everything is going on with the same alacrity as at the time when you and my dear Children were here. I have extended the front of the Abbey in the Woods from the dimensions you saw us working upon, to near two hundred feet, and a good part of the building has already reached the first floor. The Conservatory and flower Garden, which are to surround it, are begun. My Walk, which you will recollect is, according to the Plan, to be carried considerably more than twenty Miles thro' and round the Woods (to which I have just made an addition of ground by the completion of a new purchase), has already proceeded to nearly the length of nine Miles. The Season proves admirable for my planting, and, if it continues as open till Christmas, I think Vincent will by that time, with all the hands

allowed, have got above a million of Trees into the Ground for this Year's work. As these several Operations, beside the painting and new fitting up of several Rooms in the House, and the ordinary business of the Establishment, are all going on together without interruption, like the different Wheels of a great Machine, I need not tell you, that I have the satisfaction of giving constant Employment to some hundreds of People in one way or another. If this is doing any good or Service with my Fortune, and that you know is my meaning in most of these occupations, I may, I suppose, content myself with my own interior approbation; but do not think me so ridiculous as to imagine I am doing myself half the Credit with the World in general, which I should do by keeping a Pack or two of Hounds, giving Hunting Dinners and bumpering port and Madeira with Country Squires, in running for the Sweepstakes at Salisbury Races, figuring at a County Ball, or a Mayor's Feast. From many Intimations and indeed a Disposition which has plainly shewn itself towards me since my return I perceive I might acquire much Consideration and Consequence in the Course of the Winter by asking and being asked to eight o'clock Dinners and Morning Suppers either in Town or Country, and above all by a little Exercise of my Elbows at the Gaming Table. But what, my dear Mother, is to make it worth my while to quit my quiet habits, to injure my health and risk my fortune for all this unmeaning Whirl? Am I to set so lightly by all my own internal resources, and surely I have some to value, that I should make such Sacrifices to Fashion?

They may do so, who can do no better. If the Honours of my Country, and even its good Opinion, are to be obtained only by a Conformity to such idle Modes as these, I must do without them. Were I, however, to suffer the contemptuous Indifference and Ingratitude of those whom I have long obliged and who are able to return my Services, ever to induce me to withdraw myself from England, I have reason to think my absence would be almost as much felt in the Country as that of any Subject in the Kingdom. One should think that this Circumstance amongst all our fair Claims would not have passed unnoticed at this Time. But there seems, notwithstand-

ing the perpetual motion of the Revolutionary Scythe, which keeps mowing down almost all before it, and which a Peace may relax a little, but will never stop; there seems, I say, notwithstanding this, an *Heroic Security* and Confidence in some great Men, which inspires a Disdain of any trifling Assistance my Fortune may afford or might offer towards blunting the sharp edge of that Weapon of Destruction.

Tho' I ought before this time to have concluded for your sake who have no affection for long Letters, I must not forget to tell you on the subject of Lady Loughborough's Note, and Mr. Livingstone's Letter, that the Non-payment of Miss Cameron's pension was wholly owing to my late Agent's Neglect, that regularity shall be *enforced* for the future and the Arrears immediately remitted. I have lately, too, ordered some temporary Assistance to be sent to Madame de Fay which my Secret pension of £100 a year, tho' regularly paid, has not prevented her wanting, in consequence of Revolutionary Miseries.

Lady Loughborough, who has always been partial to the family of the Stills, will not be displeased to hear that the Living of Fonthill which I have given John Still is made to him worth £350 a year.

Pray say everything most kind from the Old One to his Young, and be assured, my dear Mother, of the sincere and cordial affection with which I am most dutifully Your. . . .

W. BECKFORD.

That the erection of the Abbey was in the first place dictated by a humanitarian motive, has been overlooked by all previous writers, probably because it was soon overshadowed by the more obvious fact that not long after the operations were begun, the fever of building seized Beckford and soon mastered him. He had at least this excuse, that Fonthill House stood upon a site singularly ill-chosen, being close to the edge of a broad lake, at the base of a thickly wooded hill. For the next twenty years he employed and amused himself by superintending the erection of the magnificent but unsubstantial

Gothic structure known as Fonthill Abbey, and in laying out the surrounding grounds. Whatever may be said against the Abbey, no one has anything but praise for the gardens and park, which were, indeed, singularly beautiful.

Once when Beckford was asked if Fonthill Abbey was built from his own plan, "No, I have sins enough to answer for, without having that laid to my charge," he answered, "Wyatt had an opportunity of raising a splendid monument to his fame, but he missed it." If, however, the owner was not responsible for the design, he must at least be held accountable for the flimsiness of the construction. He who builds surely builds slowly, is as sound an aphorism as any other; but Beckford's impetuous nature could not submit to the prospect of the years that must elapse before a solid structure could be erected, and he hurried on the operations by every means in his power. Contemporary accounts state that at one period every waggon in the district was pressed into the service, though this meant that the agriculture of the country suffered, and the labourers had to be duly recompensed by the millionaire; while at another time the royal works at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, were delayed, that some five hundred men might work day and night on Fonthill Abbey. The men were divided into gangs that relieved each other, and even during the longest nights of winter the work was carried on by torchlight. Beckford's determination to have the building completed within a given time resulted in the use, not of stone and brick, but of timber and cement: with the consequence that might have been anticipated. The great tower which rose to the height of three hundred feet, and was furnished with pinnacles and weather vanes, was built so hastily that time was not allowed to complete its fastenings to the base; a strong gust of wind, acting suddenly upon a large flag attached to a pole on the summit, brought down the whole structure. Beckford's only comment, made with



FONTHILL ABBEY—INTERIOR OF THE GREAT WESTERN HALL
JOHN RUTTER

superb nonchalance, was, that he regretted he had not witnessed the catastrophe.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR ISAAC HEARD*

FONTHILL, 21st May, 1800.

Impavidum ferient ruinae

It is perfectly true that the Showers fell and the Winds blew, and, after getting full possession of the upper Story of the great Tower, insisted upon its giving way to them. So, after a Somersault very nearly performed in the higher Regions of the Air, down came Boards, Beams and Scaffold Poles; but so compactly and genteelly as not to have shaken a single Stone of the main Edifice or injured the smallest Ornament.

We shall rise again more gloriously than ever, provided the sublime Wyatt will graciously deign to bestow a little more commonplace Attention upon what I supposed his favourite Structure. The Crash and the Loss sound magnificently in the Newspaper, I neither heard the one, nor felt the other.

Your kind and friendly Solitude merit my warmest Thanks. Accept them genuine as they flow from my Heart. Assure Lady Heard of all my best Wishes, and amongst the Number, do not forget that very Sincere one, of seeing you both at Fonthill; the sooner the better. Adieu for the Moment, dear Sir Isaac. I pray for the Restoration of Beltz;† the Re-establishment of Campbell; and the Health and prosperity of all the faithfull.

A new tower rose on the site of the old, and, like the other, was constructed also of timber and cement; but,

* Sir Isaac Heard (1730–1822), Garter King-of-Arms since 1784.

† George Frederick Beltz (1777–1841), employed in the office of Garter King-of-Arms, and 1814 appointed Brunswick Herald in succession to Heard. He was knighted in 1836, and in 1841 published "Memorials of the Order of the Garter, from its Foundation to the Present Time."

warning being taken by the fate of the other, this was subsequently cased with stone, though again, owing to hasty construction, the stone was not properly clamped to the timber work. This tower, which was two hundred and seventy-six feet high, was deemed insecure, and Beckford was among those who believed it would sooner or later share the fate of its predecessor. "I feared that some day I should be crushed like a lobster in my shell," he said years after. "They had neglected to secure the foundation; the foreman hinted that the tower was very insecure. 'Good Heavens,' said I, 'what is to be done? Cannot any means be adopted to render it safe—we might buttress up the foundation in some way?' The answer was, 'No, nothing but taking down and rebuilding it from the foundation will do.' This was unwelcome news. The tower was more than two hundred and sixty feet high. I was housed in the new building. It was a source of continual apprehension to me. I was like Damocles with the sword over his head. Perhaps the immediate cause of the fall was something that had gone on within, that imparted a shock a few hours, or it may be days, before it took place. The architects were not only negligent, but obstinate. They would balustrade the bottom of the open window, or rather cloister, at the top of the octagon room on one side of the passage—a thing very unsuited to a Gothic edifice. That room was one hundred and twenty feet high. This annoyed me a good deal. One day I went up with a new pair of this kind of boots on, and planting my back firmly against the inner side of the passage, I kicked with all my might against the top of the balustrade again and again. Soon loosening the stones, down they went a hundred feet, crash upon the floor beneath, covering the furniture with broken rubbish. The balustrade was then replaced with shields and more suitable designs. I gave them a lesson." The tower, however, did not fall until after Beckford had sold Fonthill, and when it came down in 1825, it destroyed

a considerable portion of the mansion. The new proprietor, on seeing the damage that had been done to his residence, remarked placidly, "Now the house is not too big for me to live in." *

* James Storer's contemporary description of Fonthill Abbey is printed in the Appendix to this work.

CHAPTER XII

"THE ABBOT OF FONTHILL" (1796-1822)

The Nelson *fête* at Fonthill : Sir William Hamilton and his second wife : Beckford desires a peerage—letter from Lord Thurlow, &c. : Emma, Lady Hamilton : "Peter Pindar" : Nelson at Fonthill : Lady Hamilton's "Attitudes" : A letter from Beckford to Lord Nelson : The quiet life at Fonthill : Some visitors : The impressions of Benjamin West and Samuel Rogers : Beckford's amusements : Selections from his correspondence, 1796-1817 : His indoor occupations : His love of books : Annotated copies : Some literary criticisms : His unpublished anthology : His religious views : "The Last Day" : "A Prayer" : His interest in genealogy and heraldry : His hatred of spurious pedigrees : His unpublished "Liber Veritatis" : His daughters : The younger marries the tenth Duke of Hamilton : The elder Lieutenant-General Orde : The tenth Duke of Hamilton : Beckford's affection for his grandson, the eleventh Duke of Hamilton

THERE was considerable surprise in the neighbourhood of Fonthill when early in 1801 the news circulated that a *fête* was to be given in honour of Lord Nelson. This arose out of an invitation from Beckford to Sir William Hamilton and his second wife to visit him at Fonthill. Sir William, who was then seventy years of age, had fallen upon evil days : in October 1798 many of his antiquarian treasures which he had sent from Naples in anticipation of his return to England had been lost in the wreck of the *Colossus* ; and shortly after, during some riots in the city where he had so long resided, much of his remaining property was destroyed. He returned to London, where Beckford placed his house in Grosvenor Square at his disposal, and in his distress, naturally enough he applied to the British Government for a pension, but



WILLIAM BECKFORD
ROMNEY
FROM AN OLD ENGRAVING

there was some hesitation in granting him this relief. Now, Beckford had always desired a peerage, as the following letter shows :

LORD THURLOW *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

April 14, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

I am this moment arrived in town ; am but this moment informed, that any list of Peers has been given in, much more a very long one ; and this I have only from your Letter. This circumstance is not promising, and I wish I knew what your friend augurs . . . that your pretensions depend at all upon my making a point of them. I should certainly be happy to second your wishes (whatever I think of them) because they are yours, and I have attended to them, as well as I knew how ; tho', till lately, I did not know, that you expected, or ever wished, to quit a more active field so soon ; which Mr. K. was prepared to open for you, whenever you chose to appear in it.*

I am, Dear Sir,

With great regard,

Your most faithful

and obedient Servant,

THURLOW.

Hitherto Beckford's wish for a peerage had not been granted : perhaps because, chiefly owing to his lengthy absences abroad, he had not brought his influence to bear upon the Government of the day ; but now he thought he saw a way at the same time to achieve his purpose and to assist his distressed kinsman.

* "Mr. K." is Lloyd Kenyon, who sat as M.P. for Hinton, on the understanding that he should apply for the Chiltern Hundreds whenever Beckford, whose interest in the borough was paramount, should desire him to do so. See p. 185 of this work.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

GROSVENOR SQUARE, *November 15th, 1800.*

DEAR SIR,

As you seemed desirous I should give you in writing the outline of the proposition I yesterday had the honour to make regarding the subject Mr. Beckford had commissioned me to converse with you on, that all misunderstanding on a matter of such importance might be avoided, I will endeavour to state it to you as concisely as possible.

Mr. Beckford is well acquainted with the just reasons you have to expect a consideration from Government in recompense for your long and meritorious services, as well as for the very heavy expenses you must have incurred in consequence of the unusual difficulties of your situation. And as Administration, from the great pressure of the times, and the number of claims they must have on them, may not find it convenient to accord with your expectations, as to making a provision beyond the distinguished mark of favour you will no doubt receive from his Majesty, Mr. Beckford has authorized me to say, if a Peerage should be offered, and you could arrange it so that the grant may be made to yourself, with remainder to Mr. Beckford and his heirs, that he would secure to you an annuity for life of whatever sum the consideration Government may make shall fall short of your expectations, with an adequate reversion to Lady Hamilton for her life. This, Sir, is the substance of what I had the honour to communicate to you; and it seems quite unnecessary for me to state any arguments in support of the just claims Mr. Beckford also has on his country, independent of the services rendered in the late trying crisis,* by the respectable corps of volunteers he has raised, and wholly armed, clothed, and supported; you are not unacquainted that he has always given his influence to Administration, by the return of two Members to Parliament, which he will have no difficulty of continuing, provided a favourable disposition should be manifested towards him.

I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS.

* An allusion to Beckford's "Adventure in Diplomacy."

Eventually a pension of £1200 a year was granted by Government to Sir William Hamilton : but nothing came of the peerage scheme. Beckford, though he did not press the matter, may still have hoped it might come to pass ; it is not known, however, if he took any notice of the following mysterious note preserved among his papers.

J. J. READING *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

LONDON, 7 July, 1825.

SIR,

It has been imparted to me in a confidential manner by a Right Hon^{ble} Gentleman, a particular friend of mine, that you were desirous some time ago of obtaining an additional degree of Rank ; if you are still anxious to obtain such an honour I think it is in my power to accomplish your wishes.

I remain,

Sir,

Your most obed. Servant,

J. J. READING.

Please to direct for me
at Mr. Chands, 16 Burlington
Arcade.

Sir William Hamilton's second wife was the notorious Emma—as Beckford put it, “ Lord Nelson's Lady Hamilton, or anybody else's Lady Hamilton ”—and owing to his fondness for Sir William's first wife, she held a lower place in his regard than she might otherwise have done. “ I never thought the second Lady Hamilton a fascinating woman,” he said ; “ she was somewhat masculine, but symmetrical in figure, so that Sir William called her his Grecian. Her countenance was agreeable—certainly not beautiful. She affected sensibility, but felt none—was artful ; and no wonder, she had been trained in the Court of Naples—a fine school for an Englishwoman of any stamp ! It was a hell of corruption. Nelson was infatuated. She could make him believe anything—that the profligate

queen was a Madonna. He was her dupe. She persuaded him at last that she had a daughter—a Nelsoness. She never had a child in her life, in the opinion of those who knew something about her. She rivetted Nelson's heart by telling him it was through her means his ships were fitted and victualled. The fact was, no minister had ever such a preponderating influence at the Court of Naples as Sir William Hamilton—it was his affair. He had been all-powerful there before he saw his second wife.” In spite of his feelings, however, Beckford was on friendly terms with her, and it was to her that he suggested the visit to Fonthill.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LADY HAMILTON

*Monday Night, 11. o'clock,
24th Novr., 1800.*

MY DEAR LADY HAMILTON,

In our addresses to superior Beings it is quite in vain to flatter or dissemble. I cannot help therefore bluntly telling you that you have many worse things to get over than our November Fogs.

The Intellectual Fog we labour under in this phlegmatic Country is the very Devil. If any Rays can dissipate this gloom, yours will ; but you must shine steadily, rise early, sit late, and Keep above the Horizon almost without relaxation till we have animated the dull Clod.

The gracious reception of the letter for the Queen and the ungracious silence observed upon it ever since, are strange circumstances ; but I have done wondering at anything from that quarter. Your interview with D.* holds forth some hope. I agree with you in thinking him the best of the tribe. The Chr. whom Sir W. fancies *his* Friend and who has decidedly proved himself my Enemy is of a colder and blacker Composition ; but what Miracles the spirit of Scotticism may work even upon this dire Composition I cannot answer. How unaccountable that there should be the smallest difficulty in the business, so energetically ready as I am to come forwards with some-

* Henry Dundas, then a Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

thing solid in exchange for a mere Vapour. I can scarcely persuade myself that any of these Satraps however callous, however obdurate, would stand plump in Sir Wm's way ; or that the K[ing] if properly informed upon the Subject, would allow cold water to be thrown upon so reasonable a proposal, because I happen to be distantly, and, I hope, very distantly interested in its success. We shall see, and they shall see and hear too, if they are determined to put Knives and Ratsbane under my Pillow whenever I attempt at any Stage of this troublesome business to lay down my Head. A fine fuss to be sure about their parchments and patents, which Bankers and the offspring of Jew Brokers have been suffer'd to purchase, and which have been scattered about with such profusion that should that pestilence, a Revolution, follow in due course the Famine now howling at our door, not a Taylor will be unprovided with Measures from the ci-devant glorious materials. And, really, at the rate our World is whirling, I should not be surprised at its making a dead stop at the dreadful point of ruin and Insurrection. Therefore, what Madness, what Intoxication to pauze so wearisomely in this Affair, and not close with the proposal cheerfully and with a good grace. I long to hear the result of your Conversation with the best of the tribe. We must not give up easily. If baffled one day—rise again the next and pursue your object with those omnipotent looks, words and gestures, with which Heaven has gifted you. By such perseverant Efforts, and by such alone, we shall obtain justice and Comfort for Sir Wm., in spite of the ungenerous, bandy legged Crooked policy which prevails, I am sorry to say, in our highest departments. In all our Manoeuvres we shall be actively assisted by Mr. Williams, with whose hearty Zeal and native Ability you are now acquainted, and who, I am inexpressibly happy to learn, has executed the Commissions, with which I entrusted him, so much to your and Sir Wm's. satisfaction.

Pray tell Lord Nelson, that tho' dead to the World in general and to almost all its great and Small Characters, I am perfectly alive to his transcendent Merit, and feel towards him those Sentiments of gratefull admiration which glow in the heart of every *genuine* Briton. I exult in the hopes of seeing Fonthill honored by his victorious presence, and if his engagements permit his accompanying

you here, we shall enjoy a few comfortable days of repose—uncontaminated by the sight and prattle of drawing-room parasites.

Now, my dear Lady Hamilton, you must be pretty well tried with my long scribbleation. I am writing by the dim light of Candles with portentous snuffs, and the driving Showers have almost lulled me and all my projects and Speculations asleep. That light alone which beams from your Image ever before my Fancy like a Vision of Madonna della Gloria, keeps my eyes sufficiently open to subscribe myself with tolerable distinctness.

Your most truly affect.,

W. BECKFORD.

My kind Compliments to your Mother whom I shall rejoice to see at Fonthill.

In March 1801 Sir William and Lady Hamilton came with Lord Nelson to Fonthill, and a numerous company was invited there to meet them, including Benjamin West, James Wyatt, and Dr. Wolcot, better known under his pseudonym of "Peter Pindar." Beckford had great admiration for Wolcot's undoubted talents: "How well he wrote—how original his style and humour," he said of him: "he understood character thoroughly—he played with human foibles": none the less it was strange to invite him to the Abbey when the Hamiltons were there, for he had bitterly assailed them in his most aggressive and ever-amusing way. In "Peter's Prophecy" he had hit Sir William hard in his tenderest spot:

" . . . The world reports (I hope untrue),
That half Sir William's Mugs and Gods are *new* ;
Himself the baker of the ' Etrurian Ware '
That made our British Antiquarians stare :
Nay, that he means ere long to cross the main,
And at his *Naples oven* sweat again ;
And, by his late successes render'd bolder,
To bake *new* Mugs, and Gods some ages *older* ;"

and in "A Lyric Epistle to Sir William Hamilton," he

had made a particularly virulent attack upon Lady Hamilton :

“O Knight of Naples, is it come to pass
That thou hast left the Gods of *stone* and *brass*,
To wed a Deity of *flesh* and *blood* ?
O lock the temple with thy strongest key,
For fear thy Deity, a *comely* she,
Should one day ramble in a frolic mood :—

“For since the Idols of a *youthful* King,
So very volatile indeed, take wing ;
If *his* to wicked wanderings can incline,
Lord ! who would answer, poor old Knight, for *thine* ?
Yet *should* thy Grecian Goddess fly the fane,
I think that we may catch her in Hedge-lane.” *

However, as Beckford subsequently remarked : “ Wolcot is the most delightful company I ever knew. He charmed my visitors at Fonthill with his wit and story-telling,” presumably Sir William and his wife bore no malice.

Lord Nelson’s journey to Fonthill was a triumphal procession. From Salisbury, where with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, he arrived on March 20, he was escorted to the Lodge at the entrance to Beckford’s park, where the Fonthill volunteers were drawn up in a double line from the gates to the house. There were cheering crowds, bands playing “ Rule Britannia,” and the firing of *feus de joie*. After dinner on the first two evenings, to quote a contemporary account, “a variety of vocal pieces were finely executed by Lady Hamilton in her expressive and triumphant manner, and by Banti with all her charms of voice and Italian sensibility.” On the third and last day of the visit the festivities were transferred to the Abbey, where in the great library Lady Hamilton struck one of her famous attitudes. “She appeared in the character of Agrippina, bearing the ashes of Germanicus in a golden urn, and as presenting herself before the Roman people with the design of exciting them to revenge the death of her husband ; who, after having been declared joint-

* The resort of the Cyprian Corps, opening into Cockspur Street.

emperor by Tiberius, fell a victim to his envy, and is supposed to have been poisoned by his order at the head of the forces which he was leading against the rebellious Armenians," so runs the account of one who was present. "Lady Hamilton displayed, with truth and energy, every gesture, attitude, and expression of countenance, which could be conceived in Agrippina herself, best calculated to have moved the passions of the Romans in behalf of their favourite general. The action of her head, of her hands and arms in the various positions of the urn, in her manner of presenting it before the Romans, or of holding it up to the gods in the act of supplication, was most classically graceful. Every change of dress, principally of the head, to suit the different situations in which she successively presented herself, was performed instantaneously with the most perfect ease, and without retiring or scarcely turning aside a moment from the spectators. In the last scene of this beautiful pantomime, she appeared with a young lady of the Company, who was to personate a daughter. Her action in this part was so perfectly just and natural, and so pathetically addressed to the spectators, as to draw tears from several of the company."* Beckford's account is more brief: "Lady Hamilton figured there before Lord Nelson, much to her own satisfaction, in the character of Agrippina—it should have been Cleopatra. She represented the character well—I must do her that justice. Perhaps Nelson inspired her."

One letter from Beckford to Lord Nelson, written shortly after this visit, has been preserved, and it may be here inserted.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to LORD NELSON

GROSVENOR SQUARE,

29 April, 1801.

MY DEAR LORD,

That lovely and generous minded Being, who inspires all those she looks at or speaks to with happiness,

* *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1801. Vol. lxxi., pt. 1. p. 298.

has inspired me with the flattering hope that, tho' almost tired with congratulations, you will not receive mine with indifference. Receive then favourably, my dear Lord, the expressions of admiration and grateful Regard with which my Heart overflows at the [thought] of your good and great Action.

We are embarked (politically speaking) upon an Ocean of Troubles now, nor do I see much Chance of reaching a secure Haven but under your immediate Auspices. Indeed, my Hopes of National Prosperity rise and sink in proportion to the degree of Confidence delegated to you. To your Lordship alone must this great Nation look up for Animation and Vitality.

Without a gleam from that prosperous Star which attends you, our State would be dark and morbid. I could *tell* you strange Things concerning the *real* disposition of the French, so different, so widely opposite to what is giving out from consequential Quarters, that you would scarcely credit them.

Notwithstanding my wishes for peace and my thorough conviction of its being attainable upon honourable Terms at this very *Hour*, I cannot help wishing the Enemy to feel once more the edge of your Lightening—Yes, another forked Dart, and I think they will have had pretty well enough of it.—Then, my dear Lord, your real and affectionate Friends may hope to see you enjoying that Tranquility and Leisure so essential to your Health. I cannot express all our anxieties when we hear of the sleepless Nights and more than mortal Days you are so repeatedly passing.—For God's sake, and for all our sakes, whilst taking so much care of others, do not entirely lose sight of that Care which is necessary for the preservation of your inestimable existence.

I am, my dear Lord,
Most faithfully &
devoted yrs,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

The *fête* in honour of Lord Nelson was the only striking event in the social annals of Fonthill Abbey. With this exception, Beckford led a retired life, though, of course, he frequently had visitors. James Wyatt was,

naturally enough, often at Fonthill, and Nicholas Williams, John Soane, "Anastatius" Hope, Sir Isaac and Lady Heard, George Frederick Beltz, and Benjamin West, then President of the Royal Academy, who, after an earlier visit, had written enthusiastically of the Abbey.

BENJAMIN WEST *to* NICHOLAS WILLIAMS, at Fonthill

LONDON, Jan. 5, 1801.

DEAR SIR,

It is a satisfaction to write to you again from my House in Newman Street, where I arrived yesterday at 12 o'clock: and in addition to this I have the happiness to inform you, that I found Mrs. West nearly recovered from the shock occasioned by the Accident which took place at my House, while I was at Fonthill. She has desired me to make her respects to Mr. Beckford, and yourself, for your kind solicitude towards her as well as for me—on this distressing event (which I found to be true, as related in the papers).

To close this letter without expressing the high sense I have of the marked friendship I received when at Fonthill, would be repugnant to my feelings; and as the Luxury to acknowledge acts of friendship, is as grateful to me, as to receive them, I beg you will make known to Mr. Beckford—with my respects, my sincerest thanks for that friendship—and how much I feel myself honoured on that occasion, by his Attention.

When I reflect on the progress, which the combination of arts have made, directed by true taste, since I first rode on the ground on which the Abbey stands—I am lost in admiration—and feel that I have seen a place raised more by majick, or inspiration, than the labours of the human hand: this is the sensation which the examination of that elegant edifice produced on my feelings; and when the part which remains to be finished, is accomplished, must raise a climax of excellence without an example in the European world—and to give an immortality to the man whose elegant mind has conceived so vast a combination of all that is refined in Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture.

Samuel Rogers, staying with Lord Bath at Longleat, received an invitation to go on to Fonthill, which he eagerly accepted. He, too, placed on record his impressions of this visit. "On arriving at the gate, I was informed that neither my servant nor my horses could be admitted, but that Mr. Beckford's attendants and horses should be at my service. The other visitors at that time were Smith, who published '*Vicus in Italy*,' and a French ecclesiastic, a very elegant and accomplished man. During the day we used to drive about the grounds in pony-chaises. In the evening Beckford would amuse us by reading one of his unpublished works; or he would extemporise on the pianoforte, producing the most novel and charming melodies (which, by the bye, his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, can do also)," he noted at the time. "I was struck rather by the refinement than the magnificence of the hospitality at Fonthill. I slept in a bedroom which opened into a gallery where lights were kept burning the whole night. In that gallery was a picture of St. Antonio, to which it was said that Beckford would sometimes steal and pay his devotions."* Further appreciation was shown by Rogers in a letter to Byron, dated February 8, 1818: "I was in Wiltshire the other day, and paid a visit to the Abbot of Fonthill. The woods recalled Vallombrosa, the Abbey the Duomo of Milan, and as for its interior, the length of the galleries (only think of 330 feet!), the splendour of the cabinets, and the magical illusions of light and shade, realised all my visions. Then he played and sung—and the effect was singular—like the pealings of a distant choir, now swelling, now dying away. He read me his travels in Portugal, and the stories related in that small chamber in the Palace of Eblis."†

Though Beckford led a very quiet life, and Rogers was the most gregarious of men, they had at least a love

* "*Table Talk*" (ed. Powell), p. 168.

† Byron, "*Letters*," Vol. iv. p. 207.

of letters in common, and after this visit they met again and corresponded.

SAMUEL ROGERS *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

Friday [23 Oct., 1818.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Many, many thanks—I should have great pleasure in waiting upon you on Tuesday, and would gladly have changed the day for that purpose—if I had not very unfortunately just received a letter from town which obliged me, however reluctantly, to set off for that Pandemonium tomorrow morning. I cannot say what a disappointment it is to me, but I hope to indemnify myself on some future day.

Yours ever most truly,

SAML. ROGERS.

Lord Byron has just written another poem after the manner of Beppo. He calls it “Don Juan,” and dedicates it in no very flattering verse to Southey. Is “Don Juan” another portrait of the same personage who lurks in “Childe Harold,” in “Manfred,” in “Lara,” &c. &c.?

Beckford was singularly independent of company, having more resources in himself than usually falls to the lot of a man. “I love building, planting, gardening, whatever will keep me employed in the open air,” he said; and, while the Abbey was being built and the grounds laid out, he might have been seen at all hours of the day, and sometimes, too, at night, watching the progress of the operations. He charged himself with the welfare of his workmen, of whom there were never less than two hundred in his employ while he was at Fonthill; he visited the poor on his estates, and made provision for those who could not help themselves. “He was, indeed, a good landlord,” said one who knew him well both in Wiltshire and Somersetshire. Some general idea of his interests may be gathered from a selection of his letters written during his residence at Fonthill.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* HIS MOTHERFONTHILL, *Aug.*, 1796.

I am sorry to tell you, my Dear Mother, that I think myself shamefully trifled with, not so much in the affair which formed the chief topick of your conversation at the villa in your neighbourhood, as in that of Portugal. I have received no answer to that important communication with which I was entrusted, no invitation to consult upon them, no mark of attention or gratitude. Things at Lisbon are advancing to such a Crisis that I shall be forced to confess my inability of recording the Prince's most excellent dispositions towards this Country—the consequence will be confirming the triumph of the Spanish Faction to the utter destruction of our commerce with Portugal and its dependencies.

I hear from all quarters both at home and from abroad the unfavourable opinion which is forming of the conduct of those in power—and I greatly fear from their inanimate behavior to me that I shall be driven into the torrent that is turning against them. Applications are making to me in a very circumspect manner to join in the attack. You are sensible, I am certain, how cordially inclined I feel myself to the Countess of Mansfield with whom you have been conversing; and, indeed, to all those with whom she is connected; but unless a very different line of conduct is adopted towards me, and the services I have it in my power to render are treated with less contempt and reserve, I shall be obliged to communicate such observations to my royal Friend in Portugal as may tend not a little to disperse the sharks which are gathering round us. This would give me the greatest pain; and as I am resolved my conduct shall in future be perfectly consistent—the same complaint I shall have reason to make abroad must be repeated, and loudly, at home.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE REV. JOHN LETTICEFONTHILL, *5th Oct.*, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

I hear with great satisfaction that you got safe to Town, that you dined in your House in Grosvenor

Square (for my Houses are all yours) . . . and that you are enjoying a long series of pleasing Expectations.

I am ready to listen to the voice of the Charmer, but I rather doubt whether in the present case he charms wisely! The profound Silence still observed by the *Boatman* contrasts powerfully with the Military rattle of Drums which caught your best Ear at Salisbury. The flourish must be loud and brilliant indeed for me to attend it. The weather is dark and gloomy and it has begun to rain with violence. I have been lighting up my Imagination with Owen's Travels. He describes Scenes in the rankest low German, Dutch and Hambro Life, without the smallest affectation, with the utmost Truth, and yet, strange to say, with the utmost Elegance. His descriptions are concise, but clear and full of picturesque, nay, poetic Feeling, in short; I am enchanted with the book and agree with you in assigning its Author the first rank in the first Class of *our* Modern Travellers, ours I say; for the French travel more agreeably than we do—with Superior warmth, fluency and Sprightliness—witness Vaillant, Savary, Volney, Dupaty, St. Pierre, and many others. I only wish he had not been quite so spiteful and malicious in his Sarcastic remarks upon poor old Mother Babylon's last stage, whose Beast lies prostrate in the very slough of Despond, bleeding out its existence at every broken Horn—on one side—the Scarlet Robe sweeping the mire—on t'other the exhausted Cup, for she can now scarcely command a thimble full of abomination to keep the cramp of death out of her aged Stomach. Mr. Owen should have disdained such easy triumph, nor have increased her parting agonies by such bitter taunts and revilings.

The Revd. Mr. Gray, a predecessor of Mr. Owen's in this spiritual hunting down of the old Enemy, has been more merciful in his *Severity*. He is for putting her out of her pain *at once*, and sinking her Stall, her Feeders, her Worshipers, nay, all those who happen to be within 30 or 40 Leagues of her Limits, the eternal City, the Campagna, the fairest fields of Italy, in one flaming Volcano, which he piously flatters himself (nay, expects) is on the point of bursting forth in the very bosom of Latium for this glorious purpose. There is a prophet for you!—with such a one in holy orders who would give a

fig for Brothers or any other Quack without the pale of the Orthodox Church? Did you ever chance to read this charitable Father's Sermons, explanations of the Apocalypse, or Travels? If you have dipped into the latter, a snug little passage may have struck your Eyes concerning me, whom he treats with as little Christian Charity as the other unfortunate beings who are to expiate in sulphureous Flames the crime of being domiciled in the Pope's Neighbourhood.

Mr. Williams received your Errhartian paragraph in due course—it will appear next Saturday and is just what it should be.

My Mother has appointed the 16th for her setting forth on her journey hither. I need not add how impatient I feel to see you once more in this region of Magic dells, Mountain and endless Forest.

The Convent advances—the walk extends—everything goes on, except Goody Portland's Boat, which seems doomed to remain a useless Hulk to all Eternity. Be assured dear Sir, that, whether aground or afloat, I shall always feel myself with cordial regard,

Your Afft.,

Hle Sevt,

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to COLONEL HAMILTON

DEAR SIR,

It cannot be without concern that I receive your account of Made. de Fay's present distress. That I may not be supposed to have neglected her since she first wanted assistance I now find myself obliged to disclose what has hitherto been a Secret and that even from herself, namely, that an Annual Resource which she acknowledges to have received from some unknown quarter, is a pension of one hundred pounds a year from me. Nor ought I perhaps in Justice to myself to conceal, that when I assigned it some Years ago, Madame de Fay was nearer to me as a Relative than as a Friend. I had been as little obliged to her Candour as she is to good Fortune. I, however, sincerely feel for her Situation and am not

only disposed to continue the Yearly Assistance above mentioned; but will, in consequence of your Application, gladly encourage by my own Example any disposition which may appear in the Head or Members of our Family to alleviate the actual pressure of her Circumstances.

After the Explanations into which I have entered above and to which I could add the attention I have obliged myself annually to pay to numerous other Claims or Solicitations which the extreme difficulty of the Times is frequently multiplying upon me, I must consider myself as dispensed from offering any Augmentation of Madame de Fay's Annuity, which however I hope neither her Age nor Infirmities will prevent her receiving for many years to come.

I shall communicate to my Mother the Letters you have sent me and I request the favor of you when you write to Made. de Fay to acquaint her that she will shortly receive a temporary Assistance thro' the same Channel by which the Annuity is remitted; at the same time entreating her to observe that no acknowledgements for the Past or Solicitations for the Future addressed to me will receive any attention.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your very obedient and
Humble Servant,

FONTHILL,
26th Nov., 1796.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to OZIAS HUMPHRY, ESQR.

OLD BOND STREET, LONDON.

SIR,

I have to thank you for the obliging Readings with which you have interested yourself for me respecting the Box at the Opera. Tho' I care little of what Feather the Fowls are I am to be placed next, I am very averse to perching so high; therefore, a Situation in the Upper Row you mention would not suit me. This Bird's Eye View of the Stage and the Audience brings rather too strongly to Mind the Gods of Drury Lane and Covent

Garden. But were I to find myself in their lofty position I should rather resemble the Deities of Epicurus and neither know or care what might be doing in a World so much below me. If a good opportunity should offer of procuring me a Station in the lower Regions of the air I should be much gratified by the communication.

Sir George Young's Disposition on the score of our old Acquaintance of having accommodated me had it been in his power is extremely obliging and demands my acknowledgements when you see him.

I am happy to hear of your intention to accompany Mr. Wyatt to Fonthill, and if you can find means of quickening his tendency towards Wiltshire I shall be more than doubly a Gainer of your being of the party. Be assured of the regard with which I remain, Sir,

Very sincerely,

Yr. Hle. Servant,

FONTHILL,
29th Novr., 1796.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE MARGRAVINE OF ANSPACH

FONTHILL, 19th Jan., 1797.

I am as hoarse as a Frog and croak dismally. This wretched Climate whether on the Banks of the Thames or on those of the humble River Nadder which be-vapours Fonthill is equally abominable. Nothing short of Yr. Star could enliven our soaking Country or render it in any degree tolerable. Commend me to K's joke about Lady Narcissa—I enjoy it prodigiously. Turbot did quite right in not epistolizing me—I hate Letters of application or remuneration or any other *ation*.

How do you like Evelina? I always thought some of the Chorusses, the Duett, etc., equal to Sacchini's finest juvenile performances; and yet he was almost besotted with *liqueurs* and Maccaroni pye when he composed this Opera. Too copious a dose of the good things just mentioned put him out just as he had got into the Third Act. Pray, if the rot should continue in the great family you know where, have you not a chance of becoming a Queen? I doubt much whether that forehead of yours does not teem with a Regal Diadem. I should not at all

be surprized at its breaking out. Some Constitutions breed the small-pox without inoculation or infection and others Royalty. Yours is up to everything.

Have you heard of the roastings whole and the most monstrous punch-bowls and the ten thousand paunch-fillers and the other coarse grandeurs at Fonthill? Some of the papers are almost choaked up with descriptions of them, dull enough; but not in the least exaggerated, which is odd; but everything was so *huge* they could not magnify it. I wish you had seen the great *Tent* where seven hundred persons eat themselves 3 parts dead. It measured 85 by 70—Williams has an admirable Knack at these *sudden constructions*. . . .

The Margrave whose serene goodness pardons all my nonsense will plead for me and not be offended at my taking the Liberty of assuring you that I am, with sincere bluntness,

Yr. affectionate friend,

THE ARAB.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REV. SAMUEL HENLEY

SIR,

The Circumstance of your Letter coming on a Saturday obliges me to lose a day in returning an answer to it, which I do with Concern, as the pressure of your affairs demands speedy assistance, and with much more, because the numerous applications from Persons with whom I am nearly or remotely connected, and whose Claims I regard as indisputable, compel me, in order to be just to them and to myself, absolutely to confine within certain Limits my inclination to assist Distress.

At the same time, that an Attention equally due to persons to whom I stand engaged and to myself, imposes upon me the necessity of not complying with the application you address to me, I feel some satisfaction in observing that you possess a Security of such a nature as cannot fail to procure you the Sum you want. Other Resources too, I am persuaded, cannot be wanting to a Clergyman of Character and Talents and of such Connections [as] you are known to possess.

I heartily wish the Cloud, which hangs over your affairs, may soon be dissipated, and that a return of tranquillity

of mind may allow you to employ to advantage those literary exertions for which you are eminently distinguished.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedt. & humble Sert.,

FONTHILL,

19th March, 1797.

W. BECKFORD.*

WILLIAM BECKFORD to NICHOLAS WILLIAMS, at Paris

FONTHILL, 11th July, 1797.

I perfectly agree with you in the propriety of your remaining in France till the Mouron business, &c., &c., &c., is settled. Methinks Monsieur Mouron was in a great hurry—

Follow up closely the great point of restitution; and amongst other objects, enquire after a certain China bason mounted on 3 griffins of gilt bronze, which was amongst my effects at Calais.—I believe this piece of China may be ranked amongst the first specimens of porcelain in Europe. As the great mass of my property lay at Calais I recommend y^r utmost vigilance in hunting it out. There were two small Japan Cabinets at Calais, one in the shape of a sort of a baby House with galleries and sliding Doors, &c.; the other with rich folding doors inlaid with Mother of pearl and gold Mosaic in the style of the Box Wyatt bought for me. Both should be gotten back if possible—the first was the gift of my relation, the late D^{ss} of Queensbury.

I am extremely happy to hear of the *Claudes* and the *Japans*—obtain, I particularly desire, the best information and proposals you can concerning them. I have set my heart upon them. You will take care, no doubt, to add proper fewel (sic) to Sanrage's Zeal by thanking and remunerating him with cordial Liberality. For material points I make no doubt of your acting with the same caution and yet energy as in those of smaller import. Nothing can be more grateful, more satisfactory, to me than the style of your proceedings.

* Henley in 1805 was appointed principal of the newly established East India College at Hertford, subsequently known as Haileybury. He held this position until January 1815. He died on the following December 29.

My ideas (though I never had the *plaisir* of seeing the friend of the rough gentleman) coincide intirely with yours. Watch Auguste well, and take care his debts to me are faithfully paid. He is a slippery Eel; but if he escapes your harpoon I shall be much mistaken. . . .

WILLIAM BECKFORD to NICHOLAS WILLIAMS at Paris

23^d August, 1797.

I am sorry you have more rascals than the Eel to deal with. Clarisson *was paid in full*. You cannot pursue the slimy reptile above-mentioned with too much caution and perseverance.

I was rejoiced at receiving a letter from my dear old Delamotte—I wish to God he could get out of his troubles and take up his abode once for all under my Roof—Errhart w^d take care of his health, and I of every thing else. Try to bring him over.

I am happy that you are in possession of my Catalogue, which will help you without much difficulty to a perfect List of the French Books at Calais procured by Chardin. Amongst the English you will find Johnson and Fielding's works, &c., and one of the finest sets extant of the poets in a vast number of vols., 12^o, morocco. *La vie de Marie Antoinette, Paul et Virginie, La chaumière indienne, Oeuvres de Molière, Oeuvre de Florian,—La Pucelle, &c., &c.,*—all these are beautiful little volumes in morocco, lined with Silk.

I cannot express how concerned I am to hear of your indisposition. It will give you comfort to learn that I had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Williams and your Young at Salisbury t'other day in perfect health. She longs to see you, but is much flattered by the attentions you are receiving from the first Power in the World. You were right in keeping up my Interest, by receiving the respectable persons you mention with Civility & liberal kindness. The public here are *not even yet* sufficiently impressed with the peculiar marks of friendship shewn to me in your person. . . . All your actions should tend to this grand point which under your prudent yet energetic management may prove of the *utmost Consequence*.—

You are in possession of my Sentiments respecting the

Bouillon Collection. No pains should be spared to attempt getting hold of it. I am, in fact, still more anxious about the Japans than the pictures—and surely they might be induced to part with the whole of them in a Lump and for a good price which nobody else *can* or *would* give them—for these small trifling toys cannot be very precious in any eyes except such as are affected with the Japan-mania in a violent incurable degree.

The Abbey goes on magnificently. Give Chardin commission to look out for fine Tapestry and look about yourself for some—much will be wanted and I should think might be purchased cheap. How came Chardin not to write to me as well as Delamotte, now I have ceased being in [*illegible*]. I pray fervently to the Glorious Saint (who, by the bye, has brought home safe all my ships, 24 in no., without a penny insurance) that the success of your endeavours may shortly restore you to your family and to Fonthill.

Assure Perregaux of my aff^t regard and receive yourself the assurance of those kindly sentiments with which

I am most sincerely yours

W. BECKFORD.

Could you establish a good Correspondence for Wine? I am in great want of Claret, Barsac, Cognac, Champagne, Burgundy, &c. It might be managed. Scholl mentioned some super-excellent at Calais. Write to him at Lausanne, if you have time, and he will impart all his stock of information. The Spanish Wines turn out ill. So that there is end of my admiration of Mr. Bell.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. WALTER, Bergh Apton,
Norwich

MY DEAR MADAM,

The Times are so menacing, and the Calls upon me from the universal Distress of my Neighbourhood so loud and numerous, that it will not be in my Power to comply with a Request which nothing but the Exigencies of the present moment could have obliged me to refuse.

Be assured, my dear Madam, that the *Conviction* I entertain of the precariousness of all Fortunes and Property

at this Period alone prevents my approving in the manner
you point out those Sentiments of particular Regard with
which I have the Honour to be,

Your Affectionate &

Most obedient

Humble Servant,

FONTHILL,

17th Jan'y., 1798.

W. BECKFORD.

My best Compliments attend Mr. Walter.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MRS. NEVILL WALTER, Bergh
Apton, Norwich

MY DEAR MADAM,

My Answer to your former Letter, little as it might coincide with your Expectations or your Wishes, was at least conceived in such Terms as, I trust, could leave you no Cause to accuse me of wanting either Respect or Feeling. From the Nature of the Conjuncture and the Imperiousness of Circumstances, combined with my Engagements in behalf of many who at different Times had sought my Assistance, arose what appeared to me, at the Moment of your Application, a justifiable Reason for not acceding to your Wishes.

A great and expensive Work I am engaged in at Fonthill, and to which you alluded in your last Letter, was undertaken two years ago at a time of greater public Security, for the Sake of giving Employment to a Multitude of people in an indigent Neighbourhood. Begun from that motive, which my Friends and the World in general have approved, and which seemed to myself almost a Duty, such an Undertaking however could not have been thought of in the gloomier Times which have succeeded. But begun, as it was, nothing except the most absolute Necessity could form an allowable plea to recede.

The Menaces of Invasion, together with the continually increasing Demands of the State to prepare us for Resistance, Demands falling heavily upon Individuals in proportion to the greatness of their Property, were Circumstances which a few Months ago very seriously affected me in common with every Gentleman of property in the Kingdom. They were such, indeed, as forbad my yielding

to any new Demands however inconsiderable, till the Aspect of things should be a little changed for the better. Unwilling to despair, I find myself now yielding to the general persuasion, that our National preparations have prevented any fatal Execution of the menaces of France.

Under the Influence of Hope I shall feel much satisfaction in alleviating to yourself and Mr. Walter, your brother, the new Assessments by the annual payment of the Sum you mention in your last Letter.

The first shall be ordered for Midsummer Day next to be made into any Hands in London you will please to appoint.

With my kindest Complts. to Mr. Walter I have the Honour to remain,

My Dear Madam,
Your most affectionate
& Obedt. Humble Servant,

FONTHILL,
5th June, 1798.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to R. BOWYER, Historic Gallery,
Pall Mall

SIR,

My Affairs for these few days past having happened to demand more than a usual share of my Attention, I have not been able to return an earlier Answer to your polite Application.

Your important Work of our National History reflects so much Honour on the British Arts, that I could not hear without Concern, that the Conductor of so noble an Undertaking should meet with Difficulties he might not have expected. So far, however, as it is your wish to obviate them by the Sale of the two Paintings of which you have obligingly offered me the Refusal, I should hope and suppose from their acknowledged Merit you are likely to experience little Disappointment when your Intention of parting with them is sufficiently known. But with Respect to my own particular plan of collecting for my Gothic Edifice; the pieces in question would on no Account be adapted to it. Subjects of a grave, religious Cast will in general best suit the solemnity of its character, and except for the Decoration of Windows, and of certain

Scenes of a peculiar Sort in the Abbey modern Painting will not answer my views, and I shall be obliged chiefly to turn my Researches toward the old School of Italy.

I nevertheless feel myself flattered by the Offer you have made me and hope you will have little Trouble in finding such a Purchaser as your Loutherbours deserve.

I am, Sir, most sincerely,

Yr. obedient &

very Humble Servant,

FONTHILL,

5th July, 1798.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to JAMES WADSWORTH

FONTHILL, 7th Sept., 1798.

DEAR SIR,

I am much flattered by the Impressions with which you and our Friends quitted Fonthill. I, on my part received the highest Satisfaction from the Visit, and shall heartily rejoice in any concurrence of Circumstances, which may hereafter occasion it to be repeated.

Your kind wishes that my Assistance may not, at a future period, be denied to the Councils of my Country are highly obliging. How far it may hereafter be demanded I cannot tell; but the majority of those who manage its affairs at present are not likely soon to pardon me for having put to the Test the Sincerity of their *Declarations* of desiring to restore Peace and my having been instrumental in conveying to them, at three different Times after the failure of Ld. Malmesbury's last Embassy, Overtures from the French Ministry to that purpose, and those such as they did not pretend to disapprove, assigning no better Reason for the rejection of them than that they were offered thro' a private Channel.

It is extremely gratifying to me to see my Father's Name brought forward with so much Regard on the Subject of promoting such Terms of Intercourse between the U. States and the West Indies as should merit the Approbation of both Countries. Were Occasion to offer of my shewing to effectual Purpose how nearly my own Sentiments concur with his Object, I should scarcely need his Example to animate my Efforts to the same End. In your Letter to Mr. Williams you express a Desire of

Knowing what I think of Mr. Goutier's Proposition of setting a Swiss Colony in the U. States. You do me great Honour in asking my Opinion upon this Subject, and still more in the weight you seem disposed to give it.

Apart from all Consideration or Estimate of the Political or Moral Character of the Swiss Adventurers, who wish to purchase Lands in America, or of the Inhabitants from their Country with whom they propose to colonize them, your own Opinion, that the Inhabitants of the U. States, now 5,000,000, will probably be doubled in twenty years, appears to have led you wisely to conclude, that, at this Time of Day, they can stand in little need of Colonies from Europe.

The difference between the New and Old World in regard to the Ability of increasing their respective Inhabitants in a given Time is prodigious. From Major Allen's account of the late Augmentation of the Inhabitants of Vermont and from the Calculations established upon his Data, your Opinion upon this Subject seems strongly confirmed. This, too, is a Case in point, nor would there be any Difficulty of producing many parallel ones from Countries newly brought into Cultivation.

It is not, however, from the abundant Productiveness of new Lands and the consequent Facility of Human Subsistence we are solely to infer the rapid Increase of Population in America beyond that of most Countries in Europe; where, according to Adam Smith, the Inhabitants are not supposed to double in a less space than five hundred years. Our forms of Civil Government, the Luxury of the Rich, the extreme Poverty of the Poor, long, frequent and bloody Wars, large Fleets and standing Armies, Celibacy enjoined by Monastic Institutions, Servitude of Peasantry and other Feudal Oppressions, will go far to account for this remarkable Difference in the increase of our Species, to the disadvantage of Europe. If this Statement be true, it may fairly be asked whether the U. States would not more prudently trust to the sure and rapid Increase of People from their Native Stock and wait a few years for a Race congenial to their own Climates, Manners, Habits, Principles, and Institutions, than hastily recur to Colonies of Strangers from an old decrepit World, whose Principles, Moral, Religious, and political, are

universally shaken and unsettled and too generally changed and corrupted, if not in many Countries intirely annihilated.

In such a suspicious State of European Society can America, with her present flourishing Population, apply to Europe for Colonists? But I shall not fulfil your Request if I quit this Subject without a few words on Switzerland. It is true, I have lived much in different parts of that Country and have had opportunities of observing its Inhabitants, both before and since the French Revolution. I am, too, in frequent Correspondence with some enlightened Persons of that Country, who are themselves observers. I may add, that I went into Switzerland with every prepossession in favour of that People; and twenty years ago with the exception of a few Towns, which from the Vicinity of their Situation to France and other Circumstances well-known, were then refined out of their ancient Simplicity of Manners, my partialities for the Country in general were rather strengthened than diminished. But since that Period, from the continual influx of idle and opulent Foreigners from all Nations into every part of Switzerland thro' motives of Curiosity, and, above all, the infection of French Manners and French Philosophy as it is called, the Influence of which the Revolution has so rapidly extended, the Habits and Principles of the Swiss are almost universally changed. Whether for the Better or the Worse the more enlightened Inhabitants of the U. States, not yet revolutionized out of the maxims of ancient Wisdom and Experience, are well able to judge. Were it admitted that two or three of the German Cantons and part of the Grisons almost inaccessibly situated in the remoter Alps, remain uncontaminated amidst this Revolutionary Corruption, these are the People most wedded to their Mountains and very unlikely to embark in Schemes of Migration across the Atlantic, to exercise the Labours of Husbandry for a few wealthy Adventurers, to whom they are probably Strangers. It should seem therefore very problematical whether the Bankers you mention, however good their meaning, have it in their power to chuse and to carry over to America Labourers and Artificers of such a Character as may deserve Reception from a wise and prudent People. Nor is it easy to discover by what Influence or by what Connections in France the Leaders of this Adventure may now or here-

after be secretly actuated. If the Scheme should, after a few years, prove no better than having sown our Tares among your Wheat it will be a bitter, but too late, a Reflection to say "An Enemy hath done this."

Thus, Sir, I have with equal Sincerity and Freedom stated my private Sentiments on your Question of the expediency of augmenting the Population of the U. States by new European Colonies. They have been solely dictated by my warm regard for a Country connected by so many relations with my own; a Country apparently destined to become the first in the World, the grandeur of whose maturity may well be augured from a state of Adolescence which has produced Characters already revered as the Benefactors of Mankind.

I am, Dear Sir, with great regard,
most sincerely,

Yr. Obed. & very Hble Servt.,

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE REV. GILBERT WAKEFIELD

SIR,

Your Application has obliged me. You represent the World, as inclined to speak favourably of my Collection of Books. I will allow no Body an Opportunity of saying anything so much to its disadvantage, as its not possessing your fine Edition of Lucretius. I am no Stranger to the high Esteem it has obtained among literary Men, and am sorry, that any Circumstance should prevent its immediate Currency to the wide extent it deserves both at home and abroad.

The Typographical Merit of this admirable Book would have claimed some share of my Notice; but that it is edited by the first Critic of the age makes me happy in seizing the earliest Moment to procure it from his own hands. May I trouble you to order me two L. P. Copies to Fonthill by the safest Conveyance you can find? Please to send me a Line with a minute of the price, and to acquaint me into what hands you wish the Remittance to be made.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

FONTHILL,

July 24th, 1799.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to HUMPHREY REPTON

SIR,

The Letter with which you favored me I met on my arrival at Falmouth about ten days ago.

It is impossible not to be flattered with an offer to contribute to the Ornament of my place from an Artist of your Eminence and Celebrity; but Nature has been liberal to Fonthill, and some Embellishment it has received from Art, has fortunately gained so much the Approbation of my friends that my Partiality to it in its present state will not perhaps be thought altogether inexcusable. I am, nevertheless, much honoured and obliged in your having thought Fonthill considerable enough to merit your attention.

I am, Sir

Your very obedient,
and Humble Servant,

W. BECKFORD.

FONTHILL,
24th July, 1799.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR ISAAC HEARD

MY DEAR SIR ISAAC,

Renounce the little Sippings you talk of, at least for the moment and resolve vigorously to take a good Comfortable potation of the Holy and limpid Waters of the Abbey fountain. Remember they are under St. Anthony's especial protection, who will bless all your goings out and goings in. My Faith in this miraculous Personage is so very lively, that I almost flatter myself he will inspire Lady Heard with a wish of visiting his shrine and his humble votary. I promise her Ladyship perfect quiet, and perfect freedom; such as is the service of St. Anthony.

Now, my dear Sir Isaac, exert yourself to Second these pious intentions. Assure Lady Heard that she shall not be worn to death with seeing Sights, nor crammed to satiety with French Ragouts, nor pressed into rumbling Carriages, nor drenched with unwholesome dews by Evening Excursions, nor worried out of Bed in the Morning to drive to Kitchen or flower gardens, Alms-

Houses or Pigeon-Houses, Farms, Temples or Plantations. At my University no such proceedings are to be dreaded. I read no Lectures, I go no Rounds, I try no Experiments, I go my own way, and wish everybody that comes to me to do the same. Give my Compliments to Mr. Beltz and put him in mind of my real and sincere desire of seeing him once more in this unceremonious Region.

With every friendly good wish believe me, dear Sir,

Your most faithful and

Obedient Servant,

W. BECKFORD.

I can find no terms to express my Heraldic Horror at a certain new . . . all over Elephant's Snouts doomed to disgrace St. George's Chapel. How the old Cadgers and Cottagers of this Name and still more vulgar Arms will stare and chuckle when they pay their twopences to see the King's Windsor and *their* Banner!

FONTHILL, Friday, 16th August, 1799.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON,
at Palermo

MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

What an Age has passed since last I had the consolation of hearing directly from you! I have written several times without a word of reply either from you or Lady Hamilton, and therefore conclude my Letters must have been blown off by some of the confounded political Hurricanes which have been so long menacing us all with destruction. My great Gothic Works have half ruined me; and the West Indies are going to the Devil, owing to the Stagnation of Sugars. You may suppose how dreadfully the state of *constipation* puts me out of humour at a moment when such opportunities of collecting the first objects of Art in the World are perpetually presenting themselves. Something has, however, been done for me by my old friend Huber of Geneva who is at present at Rome with a Wife and Child and a half-ruin'd property. This identical Scrawl will be presented to you by him, and at the same time give me leave with the utmost earnestness to recommend him and his concerns to your

R

protection. He thinks *your* Countenance might go great length towards preserving himself, what he has collected, and what he is collecting, from destruction. Let me hear from you, I intreat, and inform me whether I could with any Security set forth for the Land of Pictures, Statues and Vases, and Repose myself under the Shadow of your Wing and sing to the praise and glory of your lovely Emma, the object of more Envy, Uncharitableness and Admiration, than any being in the Universe. If you would only point out a Route, I should be very much disposed to follow it, for no person upon Earth desires more eagerly to see you both once more or feels himself more sincerely your ever

Affectionate and obliged,

FONTHILL,
10th Decr., 1799.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR WM. HAMILTON,
at Palermo

Provided, my dear Sir William, that a great gulph is no longer between us and that I come to you or you to me, I shall be contented, for be assured it is quite impossible for me to express how eagerly I long to see you and the tutelary Divinity of the two Sicilies once more.

Tell your lovely Emma that I am enchanted with her Remembrance, and feel all the force and kindness of the little line she wrote at the bottom of your last very affectionate letter of the 9th Octr., which I only received a day or two ago. By this time, perhaps, a Letter from me very strongly recommending Huber of Geneva to your protection may have reached you. By this same Epistle you will also learn my extreme eagerness to pass some time with you; if at Fonthill so much the better; but when I wrote last I dared not hope for this (to me) greatest of satisfactions.

I, therefore, indulged some expectations of being able to meet you in Italy. Should Circumstances so fall out as to oblige you to remain a little longer with their Sicilian Majesties (who must feel wretched at the thoughts of your leaving them), let me know and I will set forth—in spite of Winds, Waves and War, Ruts and Robbers. I wait

your answer with impatience and remain with unalterable regard yours etc., dear Sir Hamilton

most sincerely affectionate,

FONTHILL,
23rd Decr., 1799.

W. BECKFORD.

The Abbey will *astonish* you. The Weather is sorrowfully dull and bitter Cold!—What a Climate!—How will you be able to bear it? I am warming myself by the Altieri Claudes which have found their way to Fonthill and being magnificently framed, well-placed, and tenderly washed by Tresham, appear in the utmost Glory and perfection. I, who have bowels for Works of Art, know how to feel the sad loss you experienced by the wreck of the *Colossus*.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to SIR ISAAC HEARD *

FONTHILL, July 23rd, 1800.

MY DEAR SIR ISAAC,

I can renounce all *cris de Guerre* without difficulty ; but as I cannot so easily bring myself to abandon the soothing words of Peace I must adhere to the divine Motto of the Catisbys. Secret et Heureux is the device of all others I would prefer for the Abbey. Therefore, let us give up the Fitz Allans, Talbots, and Le Stranges with all their flames, phenixes and naked Babies ; and confine ourselves to the Felixe Race. What think you of four Catisbys ; all of a row, with their Beasts' Heads and battle axes entwisted with their own snug comfort-breathing scroll ? Chuse 4 of their best connections—begin, if you like, with Montfort, then some other decent match—then—ditto—then quarterings Montfort, &c., as settled before, under Base in an Excutecheon of . . . same crest, same motto over all—Mantling Helmets, &c., regulate as best seemeth good in your eyes.

I shall be glad to receive your opinion on this scheme by return of Post.

Pray, dear Sir Isaac, give me leave to enquire after your proceedings in the case of a certain new Hollander.

* This and the following letter refer to the coats-of-arms of his ancestors which Beckford subsequently placed in King Edward III.'s Gallery at Fonthill Abbey.

As the blood of the old Hollands boils furiously in my veins this fierce weather, I long to commit butchery on the Lion you are about, I am told, to lead such a shameful Dance. Don't for Honour's sake, set up the noble Beast intire in such a pillory. Take him to your Shambles, let him be jointed, hung, drawn and quartered. Let nothing aboriginal appear in this disgraceful Copy. Consider Sirius, consider the Dog Star, I won't answer how loud I may bark, how deeply I may yell under his influence. These are dusty days for an excursion to Arundell or Holm Lacy.

Mr. Beltz is as dumb as the Monuments in Westminster Abbey upon this subject—nor have I heard a word about it, since I poured out my heraldic Soul to him in the galleries of Fonthill.

Speak—Speak, O Speak,
Let me not burst in Ignorance.

I wish to God you would come and speak for yourself—as soon at least as the Peerage Mill has done grinding.

I perfectly approve decent attention to the golden grist these hard Times, when Iron and brass are the only metals one meets with.

But as soon as you have done your best upon this occasion and weeded up to your chin in the modern River of Dignity—remember the humble but clean rivulet of Fonthill and come and expatiate on its retired Banks. Both Lady Heard and yourself will find as much shade as falls to the lot of any Mortals this weather—exterior coolness I hope, but the warmest and heartiest welcome from, Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,
W. BECKFORD.

My best Compliments attend Mr. Beltz and very sincere Wishes of seeing him here soon; the sooner the better.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* SIR ISAAC HEARD

MY DEAR SIR ISAAC,

Since I have entered upon your plate I feel tolerably refreshed and comfortable.

The Beast is prettily hedged in and the *Respice finem* of the Attitude quite appropriate. He looks round as much as to say, kiss any extremity, yes, this Fag-end will do; but still I cannot help being of opinion that a mural crown would improve your beautiful Dutch picture—and if you would but have the goodness to put the two lateral fleurs-de-lys into mourning I should feel quite satisfied. O what a mess of Tuckers, Thomlinsons and Tolderbys, have you been forced to serve up to me—What Hashes! what *Aspakes* of Sea Monsters! I cannot swallow them—I cannot defile the Abbey with such heterogeneous mixtures as Dawkins's and Twickenham peacocks afford. Such food cannot sit upon my squeamish heraldic Stomach and I fear we must beat about the Bush for better Game. Bamfield I think you will ascertain; but Parre—how shall we manage Parre—ah, there's the Rub.

As for the Shields, west side, 3rd Division, I can renounce them without a pang, so woefully are the glories of Howard obscured by filthy mongrel *Excuteheons*, which have no pretence in the world to appear in good Company. But what shall we think of to supply the twelve vacancies and furnish a rich Banquet? perpend—pronounce.

I am, yours, Dear Sir Isaac,
With True Faith,
most devotedly,

W. BECKFORD.

I shall wait with impatience for Lady Heard's rising from the Sea. This is the right weather for a souce in the Grand Bath.

Remember me to Mr. Beltz very kindly.

FONTHILL,
July 27th, 1800.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to THE REVd. THOS. MAURICE

SIR,

Whilst I express myself greatly indebted to your Politeness for taking a Sheet out of your own Copy of the History of Hindustan to supply a Defect in mine, I have much to regret that the inattention of my Book-seller should have occasioned you a troublesome Applica-

tion, and, in consequence of it, the mutilation of your private Copy of this most valuable Work. I will order Mr. Clarke of Bond Street, my Bookseller, to send you a complete Copy if the great Demand for the Work has not made it impracticable to find one. Altho' I was not properly a Subscriber to the Volumes of Indian Antiquity—for I never place my Name in Subscription Lists—Clarke had my Orders to provide me with them, as he has constantly to send me all Works of such Consequence and Celebrity as soon as their Merit is known.

What Verses of my composition your Friend Mr. Nares can have recited to you I know not, as I am, if you will pardon a false Quantity, "*parcus Musarum Cultor—et infrequens*" and cannot recollect any Friend to whom I have given any of my poetic Trifles.

Should I be hereafter induced to bring into the Light any of the contents of my portfolio whether in prose or rhyme, I shall do myself the Honour to request your Acceptance of them in return for the real pleasure your spirited and affecting Compositions have often afforded me.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient and very

Humble Servant,

FONTHILL HOUSE,
30th Sept., 1800.

W. BECKFORD.

NICHOLAS WILLIAMS to WILLIAM BECKFORD, at Paris

CLIFTON, 11th September, 1801.

MY DEAR SIR,

Altho' I have a great deal to write you of, I must postpone the greater part of it till next Week, as my Son is gone to London to do some business in your concerns and I cannot lean forward but a very little while at a time to write.

Enclosed are two Letters from M^r Franchi, which I received by two diff^t Packets within this Week; he has written to me also wherein he informs me he shall go to you by way of Spain; he proposed to set out the first of this Month and to take his Acc^{ts}, &c., with him.—

I was very happy to learn by your Letter of the

14th Ult that you were as well as you could expect without your usual amusements. You will no doubt be surprized to hear that the Furniture at Fonthill [House] sold only for about £8000. M^r Wyatt was there all the time and is now here with me. His plans for the Mansion are compleat, and the Estimate will be ready in about a fortnight, when you shall be made acquainted with it immediately; and, as soon as you have made up your mind about it and the Tower at the Abbey is made secure, I would strongly recommend your moving the workmen to the Mansion and go on with it immediately; I have strong reasons for this which I will give you in my next.

My difficulties are at present in every respect very great, but I do not like to enter into a detail of them till I can offer a remedy with them. This I hope to do very soon for something must be done.

My health continues to mend slowly. I shall, however, return to Fonthill before the Sale for the Materials of the Wings, which is to take place the first Week in October.—

I remain,

My Dear Sir,

Yours Sincerely, &c.,

N. W.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* LADY HAMILTON

16 DOVER ST.,
18th Oct., 1801.

MY DEAR LADY HAMILTON,

I learn with infinite satisfaction that you are recovering a little those charming spirits which vivify and animate every object around you. Be assured that my impatience to come once more within your sphere of light is not small. When I shall have that comfort is uncertain, for I have a vast deal to do at this place, and have been very far indeed from well, plagued with a thousand cares and worried with business and low spirits half out of my life. Hard on myself I know how to feel for others. I wish old "Q" could be bled of 500,000 or 600,000l. It would give him new agility, and enable him to enjoy the remaining half-a-million with a much keener relish. You see to what a sad rope's end good Benjamin was brought, notwithstanding his wadding of scrip and

omnium, and with how sharp a razor red nick advised the superexcellent and superopulent Abraham to cut the thread of his speculations. God forgive them both. You recollect I never swelled the list of your admirers and was not in the least surprised at either catastrophe. You know I adore gameful Sir W. H. and am quite rejoiced at not finding his long name in the rigmarole of any of the lately discovered Societies. I daresay Mr. White will call upon you the first moment he can snatch from that whirlpool which sucks up all his time and half my substance.

Believe me invariably, my dear Lady Hamilton
and most affectionately yours,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

JOHN PEDLEY *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD, at Paris

3, JOHN STREET,
ADELPHI,
LONDON.
17th December, 1802.

DEAR SIR,

I have received the favour of your Letter of the 8th, and am glad to find that the prohibition of English Newspapers in France does not prevent you from getting a sight of what passes on this side of the Water. We do not consider here that the debates in the House of Commons have as yet taken any very interesting turn. The critical situation of the Country was generally well known before the meeting of Parliament. Ministers have confirmed it, and having obtained the supplies for which we were called together, and the Sanction of the House for putting us into a war-like posture, they are about to send us home to eat our Christmas dinners.

Mr. Pitt and the Grenville party are closely united, and if a War breaks out must come in again. Mr. Addington seems determined to keep his ground if possible, but certainly wants more support; his only hope resting upon the continuance of peace, he will preserve it, if possible, at all risks. A very flattering statement of the Revenue was laid before us on Friday; but what does it signify if the subjects are squeezed to death to obtain it? He is heaving the very bowels of the West Indians

out at this moment. I had a long communication with our Island agent a few days ago, who tells me he is instructed from Jamaica to oppose the *Ad Valorem* duty; the truth is that many who are of the committee of correspondents make very fine sugar, and so it is that the general interest suffers. Several meetings have taken place with the Minister upon the subject of relief, and an additional bounty has been given upon exportation. But nothing effectual can be expected, till the parties themselves are a little more unanimous.

You tell me I make no mention of Merton or its inhabitants—it is very true—but be assured I have not been inattentive in any respect to your concern, since we parted. Having no particular object to carry me there at present I wait till I have—but unless I receive more encouragement than I have lately met with from some quarters, I am afraid your prognostications will turn out but too true.

I have lost the whole of two mornings waiting to receive Mr. Wyatt, agreeably to appointments made with him by Mr. Foxhall. If he is so little master of his time as this, it is very uncertain when we may meet—as the sitting of Parliament will prevent my leaving town before the 23rd, and I could hardly expect Mr. Hill to attend to business during the Christmas holidays, I believe I shall postpone my journey into Wiltshire till January—I must surely see Mr. Wyatt between this and then, and make some appointment with him to meet me there.

I regret to hear that you still find yourself so cramped and uncomfortable at Paris, and if you think you should be happier at home why not return? It looks a little indecisive to be crossing the Channel so often at such a season, but in matters so innocent as this, substantial happiness is not to be sacrificed to opinions. If you could make yourself at all contented, I should recommend your staying there three or four months longer, the change will be greater and pleasanter afterwards, but it ought entirely to be made to depend upon your mind.

That I wish you every happiness, and a great deal more than I can command for you, you very well know. You may depend upon your best exertions to make you so so long as my health lasts—but for several years past, I found my spirits better than my Constitution, and should

not be greatly surprised at finding myself incapable of undertaking so much as I am now doing. You will scarcely credit it perhaps, but I do assure you that every moment of my time is occupied in your concerns, and they require the utmost stretch of thought that better heads than mine can give them.

You may be surprised to hear that Mrs. Hervey's Attorney in Jamaica (Mr. Cuthbert) has increased her Debt in that Island, in the management of only one Estate and the half of another within the last two years, to the amount of upwards of Seventeen thousand pounds; and to add to this blessing Mr. White tells me it is likely to be the subject of a Chancery suit. Only view the consequences of similar administration of your great property! I am guarding against it by all possible means and trust I will be more successful.

I remain with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your faithful and obedient humble servant,

JOHN PEDLEY.

JOHN PEDLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD, at Paris

LONDON, 1st April, 1803.

MY DEAR SIR,

You will be very glad to hear that Mr. Wyatt has at length reached Fonthill and prolonged his stay at that place till everything was set to rights. If you could be but assured of such weather as we have had for the last fortnight, I think you would never leave it again. It has absolutely been too warm, and in the Sun almost approaching to Sultry, but I wish we may not be made to pay for it yet.

Mr. West has sent to me, to let me know for your information, that the two Claudes (I presume the same you mention in your last favour of the 26th ult.) had made their appearance here within the last ten days, and that if you were disposed to give a large price for them, he could obtain them for you. I told him what you could have purchased them for last year, and desired him to learn what would be taken for them now.

You know my sentiments so fully upon all these subjects, that it is quite unnecessary to repeat them—but

if two such Pictures as these, and which you seem to be so desirous of possessing, can be purchased for 1500*L*, or any reasonable advance, and considering that the opportunity once lost may never return, I shall be very glad to do anything in my power to assist you in obtaining them. At the same time I cannot remind you too often that Lord Arundell's Estates, or the lands more immediately adjoining yours, are in my opinion of the last importance to you and that by engaging too deeply in one thing, however desirable, it may cramp you in others of more importance.

In your next you may probably touch upon the subject again, and say to what length you would chuse to go.

Such has been the general embarrassment of West India Affairs in consequence of Willis & Waterhouse stoppage, that Mr. Glenney, like his neighbours, has been put to difficulties and neglected to send the March payment to Rangoon at the usual time. Both that and the April Payment, as well as £500 in the room of the Jamaica Bill sent to Mr. White, is to be paid in this morning, amounting together to upwards of £2000. Mr. White has been so much pressed for money, he was obliged to discount your Bill and apply it towards carrying on your law concerns and cannot conveniently repay it. I have therefore made the arrangement as above. Mr. Westmacott's Matter is still depending, but will probably be settled on the 20th inst. It cannot by possibility take any course that should occasion you another thought. It has been unceasingly troublesome ever since you went away, but I will not trouble you with further particulars till I have the pleasure of seeing you.

We are still in the utmost suspense between War and Peace. The Stocks are the only Barometer, and nobody ever witnessed such fluctuations. A very general report prevailed this morning, that Mr. Pitt, Lord Melville and several others of the old Ministry, were coming in again—but we are in reality as much at Sea as ever. Poor Sir Wm. Hamilton continues dangerously ill, and is not expected to recover, he may linger some time, but Lord Nelson thinks he cannot get over it.

I enclose a Letter from the Miss Beckfords and as you say you shall not leave Paris till about the 20th, I propose to have the satisfaction of writing to you for the last time,

unless I receive your directions to the contrary, this day F'night. That this may meet you in your usual good health and Spirits is the very sincere wish of

Dear Sir,

Your faithful and obliged hble. Servant,

JOHN PEDLEY.

JOHN PEDLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD, at Paris

GROSVENOR STREET, 11th Decr., 1806.

MY DEAR SIR,

That you are my very true and sincere Friend, I have never for a moment doubted since I had first the honour and pleasure of being introduced to you. And whether I have omitted any opportunity of actively shewing my sense of it, must be left to you to determine.

I see the full force of all your kind advice, and look upon a seat in Parliament for the present time [as] inestimable.

In the late treaty I submitted myself entirely to Mr. White and Mr. Fownes, and was willing to do anything they recommended. Mr. Fownes strongly advised me not to offer more than 5000 Gs, and had hopes of something else in the same quarter upon better terms. Unfortunately he was obliged to leave town for a week, and, the parties being strangers to Mr. White, nothing came of it. These are the facts, and I fear the time has now passed by, and that lamentation is unavailable. It is one of the mischiefs in these treaties that one cannot interfere oneself. The Agents will keep it to themselves and the reason is obvious.

The Marquis of Bute, you know, is very anxious to have your assistance in the Saltash Contest. If you give it to him and he proves successful, you should have an engagement for a Seat for life at all events. But suppose, in addition to this, and by way of proving his sincerity, he were to offer to bring me into Parliament immediately upon the payment of a reasonable sum of Money, say £3000, do you think it should be afforded to him upon these Terms. Mr. White swallows the idea most greedily. With your assistance (and a little Parliamentary packing) I think they might make the worse appear the better cause. These are not times for half friendships. Ministers must

have the Jobs done thro' thick and thin, and they certainly hope to pack a sufficient number to do this for them. Your aid might cloak it with a sort of justice.

Mr. White returned in due course and in time to complete the business yesterday. With respect to Morland, I will call upon him when I make your usual payment in January and acquaint him with the arrangement. Mr. White tells me he has been enabled to fix the completion of the K.T. matter for the Month of January *certain*.

I regret as much as you can do, the few opportunities afforded to me of late, of the great pleasure I always find in your society, but look forward to the next few months for the enjoyment of a good portion of it.

The weather continues open and pleasant for the Season, and with reference to your improvements in planting you must be glad of it, tho' it may be damp and unhealthy. My constant best wishes attend you.

& I am always, my dear Sir,

Very respectfully and faithfully yours,

JOHN PEDLEY.

JOHN PEDLEY to WILLIAM BECKFORD, at Paris

GROSVENOR STREET,

8th January, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR,

Upon the present occasion of the Saltash Treaty, you may depend upon the same zeal and interest I have uniformly manifested in every undertaking I have ever engaged in for you, and shall be happy to acquaint you my exertions have been attended with the same good luck they have commonly been crowned with.—I say happy—because you seem to wish to part with this Jewel so ardently—but when accomplished—I, myself, shall consider it by far the greatest loss and fall you have met with. The Times are ruinously bad, God knows, but with prudence and economy your affairs may yet go right.

If you part with your Honours they are irretrievable. No new purchase, if you should hereafter be disposed to make any, could Robe you with them again.

It would take years to give Notoriety to the purchase of any other Borough—as it will to some of our New-made Peers, many of whom are as obscure as ever, but

with respect to Saltash—you have fought for it, and won it—and certainly ought to wear it—but I have done—I have said too much perhaps already—the Dye is cast, and I will be instrumental to you if I can, in getting rid of it.

With respect to the Opinions you mention Mr. White is to take to you, let me entreat you to consider well before you determine. A single false step upon some occasions is irretrievable. You stand high in the estimation of the World at present, at least for the noble qualities amongst others of Liberality, Generosity, Disinterestedness, and greater contempt for Money. If you have been imposed upon or deceived, nobody will reflect upon you for seeking justice and endeavouring to obtain your rights; but let your Suit bear the stamp of this fair and honourable pretension upon the very face of it. This, I think, it would do if you only reclaimed property to the Value of—whatever Sum—which appears to be conveyed away at the same time that you say you only intended to give *some* Land. It is one thing to reclaim this property but the claim to the Estate—the Land is upon a very different footing.

If you intended to give some Land as you acknowledge you did—people will not distinguish as to quantity. You reclaim the Negroes and other property conveyed with the Land, because you did not intend to give *any*. Pray consider this a little, my dear Sir, and give it your best attention.

I hope and trust you will excuse my interesting myself upon a subject on which I have thought you do not wish to consult me, but the anxiety I feel in everything that concerns you, but more especially in what regards your fame and memory, compels me to obtrude so far. I rely entirely upon the knowledge you have long had of my best wishes and intentions towards you for an excuse for these observations, as well as for everything else that has or may ever pass between us upon any and every other subject.

Rely upon it, Nobody wishes you better than me.

Always very respectfully

and faithfully yours, my Dear Sir,

JOHN PEDLEY.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to JOHN PEDLEY

FONTHILL ABBEY, *Thursday, 25 July, 1817.*

M^r Smith, my dear Sir, gave you true information—I was a good deal oppressed by the dulness of the London heat, and retreated rather in quick time to Salthill—From thence I moved to Fonthill, which being a Hill in earnest, afforded me fresher breezes—

I have need of bracing to meet with any degree of fortitude the privations & mortifications to which by excess of knavery on t'other side the Atlantic and excess of negligence, ignorance, and obstinacy on this, I am reduced. The heat has been succeeded in this part of the World at least by a succession of alternately violent and driving rains, highly unfavourable to crops of all kinds, except excuses which promise to be abundant.

Uncomfortable as I feel at the thoughts of being left by your absence without one really zealous and able counsellor, I am not so selfish as to regret your scheme. The excursion will do you good, and I need not say how rejoiced I shall be to see you returned, and returned with a renovation of spirits. Go on, remain where you will, my best wishes will ever accompany you.

I am be assured my dear Sir, with true and friendly regards

Most sincerely yours

W. BECKFORD.

Beckford's indoor occupations were numerous. It has been said, and with some show of reason, that he was the most accomplished man of his time. He was a good musician, he could draw, he spoke five modern European tongues, and could write three of them with elegance; he was well acquainted with Persian, Arabic, and, of course, the Latin and Greek classics; while his reading was at least as extensive as that of any of his contemporaries. Any one who has these accomplishments can scarcely be dull, and Beckford, in addition, was an enthusiastic collector of books, pictures, and other treasures, in pursuit of which he frequently went to London to inspect the dealers'

stocks of scarce volumes and fine paintings. Of Beckford the collector, however, more will be said in another chapter. Though he yielded to none in his love of tall copies, splendid bindings, and rare editions, he was student as well as collector; and it was characteristic of his tastes that while, in later life, he sometimes disposed of a picture, he never sold a book. Even as in his earlier years he secluded himself for a while to read Gibbon's library, so afterwards he rarely put on his shelves any volume until he had made himself acquainted with its contents; and, large as his library was, to the end of his days he would without a moment's hesitation put his hand on any book or print he possessed.

It was his habit to annotate his books, and to write some brief criticism on the fly-leaf. Sometimes his comments covered three or four pages; and one of the most valuable items offered at the sale of his library in 1882-3 was this item, knocked down to Quaritch for £42—"Beckfordiana. Transcript from the autograph notes written by Mr. Beckford on the fly-leaves of various works in his library, 7 vols., Manuscript (folio)." His comments were usually shrewd, and often so caustic as to suggest that had he been obliged to earn his living he might well have turned an honest penny by contributing to one or other of the quarterlies in the days when severity was the motto of these periodicals. Some examples of his jottings may prove interesting:

Gibbon: "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

The time is not far distant, Mr. Gibbon, when your almost ludicrous self-complacency, your numerous and sometimes apparently wilful mistakes, your frequent distortion of historical Truth to provoke a gibe, or excite a sneer at everything most sacred and venerable, your ignorance of the oriental languages, your limited and far from acutely critical knowledge of the Latin and the Greek, and in the midst of all the prurient and obscene gossip of your

notes—your affected moral purity perking up every now and then from the corrupt mass like artificial roses shaken off in the dark by some Prostitute on a heap of manure, your heartless scepticism, your unclassical fondness for meretricious ornament, your tumid diction, your monotonous jingle of periods, will be still more exposed and scouted than they have been. Once fairly kicked off from your lofty, bedizened stilts, you will be reduced to your just level and true standard.

Joseph Brasbridge : “Fruits of Experience ; an Autobiography.”

They who like hog-wash—O there are amateurs for everything—will not turn away disappointed or disgusted with this book, but relish the stale and trashy anecdotes it contains and gobble them with avidity.

Miss Aikin : “Memoirs of the Court of James I.”

I wish Lucy would take to the needle instead of the pen, and darn stockings instead of history. She would then be more harmlessly employed than in leading unhappy readers with open appetites into the purchase of literary aliment already reduced to a *caput mortuum* by repeated stewings.

Peter Beckford : “Familiar Letters from Italy.”

This book has at least some merit—the language is simple : an ill-natured person might add—and the thoughts not less so.

John Galt : “Letters from the Levant.”

A specimen of Mr. Galt's *own poetry*, about as harmonious as the screeching and grating of the wheels of a Portuguese dray. One might as well make sense of such sounds and fancy them articulate as comprehend the meaning of our author's vile strummings upon his discordant lyre.

J. Wolff : “Sketches on a Tour to Copenhagen through Norway and Sweden.”

The Author from one end to the other of this very middling performance continues gossiping, senti-

mentalising, quoting trite poetry and bad, ill-spelt French, jeering, sneering and frolicking with about as much grace and vivacity as a dancing Bear. I sincerely hope the cares of authorship may never again disturb his repose at Sherwood Lodge.

N. Tenhove: "Memoirs of the House of Medici, with Notes & Observations by S. W. R. Clayton."

In these volumes, not only the embellishments, but the original matter, the translations, and the notes, are much upon the same level, and nothing [is] wanting to produce complete mediocrity, but in different paper and two columns of closely squeezed print like the commonest magazine or the *Newgate Calendar*.

These examples of Beckford's comments on books must suffice; but it is not to be thought that he was always a hostile critic. He frequently had a kind word for his contemporaries. Thus, he found "Guy Mannerling" "most admirable," and thought the "Ingoldsby Legends" were "perfect in their way"; and if he believed rightly enough that Theodore Hook's plots were not very original, and that this writer did not display much thought, at least he found worthy of praise the manner in which the stories were told, and the judgment and effect with which the minor incidents were introduced into the narrative. "I could not get him out of my head yesterday," he said, after reading one of Hook's novels. "He brings a pretended surveyor of a railway to the owner of a pet house, telling him he is come to take bearings for a railway, which is to proceed right through his property. The alarm he causes is ludicrous and well sustained. Such incidents seem to be his *forte*." At another time Beckford hit off the characteristics of two writers of his day with considerable humour. "Lord Jeffrey is a writer of accurate perception, but I do not like these patent intellects of magazines, their writings become biassed—they write too much upon rule, and for party purposes—Jeffrey is

too high dried to please me ; he wanted a little of Sidney Smith's liquors. But as for Brougham ! Ah, he's delightful, charming ! malicious ! he is as spiteful as my dwarf—an electric eel. He pokes up his cold nose, electrifies the political waters, and the gudgeons are mesmerised—he ought to be read, he is so clever." If Lord Brougham ever saw this criticism of himself, it would have pleased him.

Beckford's sense of humour and his sound judgment found an outlet in the compilation of an anthology that, however, has never been published. The preface, dated October 25, 1834, sufficiently indicates its scope.

Readers and Reviewers, who do not *always* come into the former class, can hardly find time nor inclination to particularize the strange and fantastic passages which lie scattered throughout almost countless publications.

Enjoying more leisure than falls to the lot of every dabbler in Literature, I have made extracts on the fly leaves of most of the books in my library, a selection from which, accompanied by a few straggling observations of my own, may possibly afford amusement to persons not knowing how to dispose of an idle hour.

Many of the passages I have noted down are so incredibly absurd, so loftily conceited, and so arabesquely florid, that, unless people submit to the drudgery of referring page by page to the books themselves, I shall scarcely obtain credit for fidelity of transcription ; I may venture, however, to pledge myself for their scrupulous exactitude. In many cases I have abridged—never amplified. Every line quoted in these volumes is to be found in the originals, and if these lines are too often "Fruits of Conceits and Flowers of Nonsense" I am not answerable for their silliness and extravagance ; my task has been merely to record curious ebullitions of egotism, and remarkable deviations from good sense and good taste, found very often where least expected.

Books on religious subjects interested him always, and he annotated a number of them. On the fly-leaf of a pamphlet, "Co-Adamitæ proving Men besides Adam and

Angels did not fall" (1732), he wrote briefly, "No Hell—hurrah!" and to take another example, in William Rae Wilson's "Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land" he inserted five pages of caustic notes, concluding :

I am rather afraid that reasoning Believers will not find their faith particularly strengthened by the perusal of this volume, which, when it does not repeat what has already been again and again repeated, conveys little if any information at all. The sceptic and the scoffer, I fear, will not be induced to lower their tone or cease doubting or gibing in consequence of Mr. Wilson's Thunders. Truths divine alas, do not come mended by his botchings, so that, instead of a resplendent garment worthy to grace the nuptials of the Lamb, we are presented with old clothes and worn-out tatters fit only to furnish material for scarecrows.

Though officially a member of the Church of England, there is no doubt that he leant towards Agnosticism.* Discussing the difference between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic religion, he said with great energy and earnestness, "The one is the opera and the other the dress rehearsal. Gracious goodness! the Roman Catholic religion is filled with fine stage effects, glittering crosses, censers, mitres, crosiers, dresses, candles, pictures, banners, processions, perfumes, cloths, and music, from the deep tones of the organ to the delightful squeakings of the Pope's eunuchs." Not unnaturally, however, the æsthetic side of the Roman Catholic religion made its appeal to him. "One must become half-Catholic to enter fully into the glories of Italian art—religion with us is a cold, reluctant duty. We acknowledge God, but fear to love Him. We are afraid of any thing that fits our minds for devotion—we make religion a duty, not an affection—when

* It is but fair to state that Beckford's copy of Strauss' "Das Leben Jesu" (Tübingen, 1837) contains a note in the handwriting of his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton: "Mr. Beckford meant to have *refuted* this impious publication."

the formality of worship is over, we have done. The true spirit, superstition, devotion, whatever you will, was in the heart of the Italian artist—it oozed out at the end of his pencil, bathing his work in the beauty of holiness.” He indignantly denied, however, that he had “gone over to Rome.”

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THOMAS WILDMAN

22 Aug., 1795.

. . . Those who have been entertaining you with my change of religion are either Knaves or Simpletons. I am just what I have always been in that respect—an Amateur, a Dilletante, a Connoisseur perhaps, but no Professor. You have seen me perform at St. Sulpice, if you please to recollect, and so you might see me perform upon this theatre. Beyond a few genuflexions or expressions in time with the rest of the audience, I defy Mr. W. and all his Set—to prove anything. The gravity with which you write of my having changed my Religion from Protestant to Roman Catholic takes away all gravity from me. I laughed as if I had been seeing the farce of the Agreeable Surprise or Tom Thumb—I change indeed! Pray when did you know me adhere to the Sect I am supposed to have relinquished? How can a Man who was never at Wapping be said to have gone from Wapping to Rome?

In a correspondence with a dissenting minister, Beckford waxed wroth over the badness of the psalms and hymns used in worship considered as poetical compositions. “Some may think this a matter of no moment,” he said indignantly. “One of the popes said it was blasphemous to submit the word of God to the rules of grammatical composition—God should have the best that can be offered in relation to His worship—chapel and church make sad work of their psalmody.” Beckford made no attempt to write religious verse, but in some of his poetical effusions he wrote gravely and reverently of sacred themes.

THE LAST DAY

"Dies iræ, Dies illa!"

Hark ! heard ye not that deep appalling sound ?
 Tremble !—for to the vex'd, the affrighted ground
 Heaves strong in dread convulsion—streams of fire
 Burst from the vengeful sky—a voice of ire
 Proclaims : "Ye guilty, wait your final doom :
 No more the silence of the tomb
 Shall screen your crimes, your frailties, Conscience reigns,—
 Earth needs no other sceptre ;—what remains
 Beyond her fated limits, dare not tell :—
 Eternal Justice !—Judgment !—Heaven !—Hell !"

A PRAYER

Like the low murmurings of the secret stream,
 Which through dark alders winds its shaded way,
 My suppliant voice is heard : ah, do not deem
 That on vain toys I throw my life away !

In the recesses of the forest vale,
 On the wild mountain, on the verdant sod,
 Where the fresh breezes of the morn prevail,
 I wander lonely, communing with God.

When the faint sickness of a wounded heart
 Creeps in cold shuddering through my sinking frame,
 I turn to Thee—that holy peace impart
 Which soothes the invokers of Thy august name.

O all-pervading spirit—sacred beam !
 Parent of life and light !—Eternal Power !
 Grant me, through obvious clouds, one transient gleam
 Of Thy bright essence in my dying hour !

As much as in religion, or even more, Beckford was interested in genealogy and heraldry, especially in so far as it concerned himself. Himself descended, paternally or maternally, from all the Barons of Magna Charta, from whom there was issue surviving, he sometimes showed the pride that apes humility.

I most heartily wish Mr. Burke had suffered the Beckford family and all their glories to sleep undisturbed. These are not times for displays of this nature, royalty being at a woeful discount. Like certain fish at certain seasons, such dishes had better now be dispensed with.

So he wrote to Clarke, the bookseller, with whom he was on intimate terms, concerning Burke's "History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland," published 1833. When he saw that work, however, his tone became one of great indignation.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

So far from exhausting his *pièces justificatives*, [Burke] has omitted a most splendid and little-shared descent from David Earl of Huntingdon, son of King Malcolm Canmore, through Hastings, Catesby, Barre, Talbot, Comyn and Baliol, and twenty descents besides, and twenty to boot, almost *ad infinitum*. Blood royal enough, in short, to make black puddings, were all the swine in Christendom to fail.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

I beg that you will *immediately* take the enclosed to Mr. Beltz, for *immediate* correction, and at the same time inform Mr. Burke that I never intended, nor intend to enter, into any correspondence upon the subject. It was upon that sole condition (that I should not be bothered upon a subject I care little about), that any account of the Beckford family was furnished. . . . Mr. Beltz's account *was* a model of elegance . . . it is now woefully vulgarized. The inaccuracy and bad taste of this vile mess are equally insufferable.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

Garnishing a dish with faded parsley is quite in the style of an *à la mode* beef eating house. . . . How vexed, how mortified, Mr. Beltz must have felt at the rank bungling ignorance of pretenders to heraldic knowledge! I never read anything more impertinently disgusting and flippant than the little note I enclosed to you, and which

the writer, in defiance of my regulations, took the liberty of addressing directly to me. I shall not forget this inroad upon all my long, very long established etiquette in a hurry. . . . Mr. Burke and the person who interested himself about him with you, are little aware of the Vathek-like ceremonial of my establishment.

Meeting a clergyman who declared himself a descendant of Princess Pocahontas, "that is a descent from a real sovereign of nature, not one of our modern mushrooms," Beckford wrote to Clark. "If the reverend gentleman could give it me, I would willingly give him any three of my ancestors he liked to pick out in exchange." For those persons who falsely claimed descent from distinguished lineage, Beckford had the utmost contempt. "Heraldry is a useful study before the time when the visitations ceased (in 1620). Since that time the heralds have dispersed a vast quantity of spurious gentility," he said one day when discussing the subject with Cyrus Redding. "Sir Isaac Heard once came to me full of tribulation, to consult about an application made to him by the distant relation of a peer who had succeeded to the honours. He wished to have his own arms quartered with those of the peerage. Heard hunted, until he was tired to death—no arms could he trace to that branch of the family. 'What shall I do, Mr. Beckford?' I was hard at work at the time studying heraldry. 'Do, why, as he never had arms, help him out—make him some. . . . You asked my advice—make them—don't lose a warm fee for the lack of finding material—I will invent them for you.' 'A quartering,' he added dryly, 'appeared from somewhere.'" Spurious pedigree always aroused Beckford's ire, and when he read Sheffield Grace's "Memoirs of the Family of Grace," privately printed in 1823, his wrath knew no bounds.

Of all the idle braggadocio pedigree books I ever met with—this volume is perhaps the most consummately flum-

meracious (he wrote on the flyleaf of the book in 1833). Not even Ulster K. of Arms himself, that indulgent receiver of goods of this kind, ever compiled or tolerated a choicer specimen. The numerous views of Totterdown Castle, hideous burying-places, shabby genteel villas, quizzical modern portraits, old coppers of R[oya] and Noble personages, retouched for the occasion and lugged in head and shoulders, though worn to the stumps like the family itself, and right worthy of the work and in the best keeping with it—in short, the genius of the defunct Sir R^d Gammon seems to have presided over this stupendous hodge-podge—Sir R. G., whose baronetcy was created and entailed upon the Grace family by K[ing] G[eorge] III. Sir R. G., the brother-in-law of a brace of Dukes, whose mother to be sure had the honour of being one of the Graces, but whose father, though originally we take it for granted——of——in the county of——, was, we are equally certain, seated most comfortably and for many years as an apothecary in Cow Lane.

Beckford's distaste for new families and for *mésalliances* contracted by men and women of rank led him to compile a “Liber Veritatis,” which, though still preserved in manuscript, has not been, and is not likely to be, published. “I cannot bring myself to let out the ‘Liber Veritatis’—*ce n'est pas toute vérité qui est bonne à dire*,” he wrote to Cyrus Redding in February 1838; but to this correspondent he subsequently showed the work. “That is my ‘Liber Veritatis.’ I pull the peerage about sadly. I recently amused myself by examining the claims of the peerage to be ‘gentlemen’; in the heraldic sense, I mean. You cannot think how few there are who can claim ancestral honours, yet all pretend to do so the moment they get a coronet. Nobles in the heraldic sense are not peers exclusively; they are those only who bear a coat of arms, the older are more noble—they need not have a title at all. A minister may make a peer of anybody, but he can only through the crown make a noble of inferior rank to a country gentleman whose family has long borne arms. On the continent a count may take precedence of

a prince, if not of a royal line, if he be a noble of older standing. There are not more than thirty of the old nobility in the House of Lords—why pretend it is otherwise? A peer of to-day, it is true, will do for legislative objects. . . .” “Every syllable is true,” he remarked of the work on another occasion; “but I must not publish it. Truth is a bitter draught.”

It has already been said that after the death of his wife, Beckford sent his children to his mother, then residing at West End. Their education was conducted by the Rev. John Lettice and a Swiss governess, until they grew old enough to go to live with their father. Beckford is perhaps seen at his best in his relations with his younger daughter. She could always control him, even when he was in one of his terrible rages—an inheritance from his Jamaican forebears; and John Mitford tells a pleasant and amusing story of the way they “acted Idiocy for two or three days at Fonthill. They used to amuse themselves in imitating the Peacocks in the Woods. One day Beckford said to her, ‘I called to the Peacocks to-day, and they answered me.’ ‘Ah!’ said she, ‘it was I who heard you and answered.’” * To amuse the girls he would write little verses; one of these effusions has been preserved and may be given as a curiosity.

IRREGULAR SONNET ADDRESSED TO
SOLOMON ABRAMS DURLACHER,

THE FAMOUS CORNING MAN.

Divine Durlacher, hail, whose plastic hand
O'er my crisp Toe rich drops of comfort rolled,
Sure thou art fit to lead the Godlike Band
Of Pain-assuagers, fabled Leeches old,
In better Worlds I mean, for here below
Nought that is perfect e'er can linger long;
Nay, whilst I meditate my artless Song,
Some natural pangs I feel in either Toe!
Why should I have on torturing Themes to dwell
—Oh . . . my poor Corn's unconscionable Swell.

6 *Jany.* 1800.

* British Museum, Add. MSS., 82566 f. 34.

The girls inherited their mother's beauty and charm, and, in addition, some part of their father's talent; so that it is not surprising that when they appeared in society they made a sensation. The younger, Susan Euphemia, is described by Rogers, in a letter to his sister, dated Tunbridge, October 13, 1805, as "a daughter of Fonthill, very beautiful, and a prodigy in every respect,"* and by Lord Malmesbury, "as one of the handsomest women of her time."† In April 1810, she married her cousin-german, Alexander, Marquis of Douglas and Clydesdale, afterwards the tenth Duke of Hamilton. Of this alliance there was issue: (1) 1811, William Alexander Anthony Archibald, eleventh Duke of Hamilton; and (2) Susan Harriet Catherine, who married in 1832 the Earl of Lincoln (son and heir of the Duke of Newcastle), from whom she was divorced in 1850.

The elder, Margaret Maria Elizabeth, has been described by Rogers as being in appearance and disposition "a perfect angel"; "her delight was not to be admired herself," he added, "but to witness the admiration which her sister never failed to excite."‡ We read of her as staying with Lady Anne Hamilton, at Tunbridge, in 1805, when Thomas Hope was making assiduous love to her.§ Beckford hoped that this suitor might marry her, for he had conceived a great admiration for the author of "Anastasius." "Speaking of Mr. Hope and 'Anastasius,'" Cyrus Redding has recorded, "Beckford declared it was a considerable time before he could believe that story was written by him. Hope exhibited less apparent capacity for the production of so fine a thing than any author he had known. He had read the work again and again. The fidelity of colouring—the perfect delineation of Greek character—the knowledge of detail—the mind displayed,

* G. W. Claydon, "Rogers and his Contemporaries," vol. i. p. 25.

† "Memoirs of an Ex-Minister," vol. ii. p. 184.

‡ "Table Talk" (ed. Powell), p. 170.

§ Thomas Moore, "Diary," vol. vii. p. 241.

made it a matter of mystery to him in some degree still. That any one should live to be so old before he produced a literary work of such a high character, was surprising; the world was full of miracles. Mr. Hope's 'upholstery book' was no promising precursor of such a tale—it would for ever puzzle him how it happened. 'What a fine passage was that description of the ruin of Euphrosyne—how heart-rending. I was obliged to lay down the book when I read it the first time before I got to the conclusion—it was agonising—the picture is worked up to indescribable horror.'” Though a dutiful daughter, Miss Beckford was not willing to carry her obedience so far as to marry to please her father, and in defiance of his wishes, she married in May 1811 Colonel (afterwards Lieutenant-General) James Orde, a member of a Northumberland family, a clever soldier and a well-to-do man. Beckford was furious, declined to see her again, and never mentioned her name. She died in 1818, but his anger endured until the end, and in his will there is no mention of her two daughters.

With the Marquis of Douglas Beckford had been on the best terms years before the marriage.

THE MARQUIS OF DOUGLAS *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

MY DEAR BECKFORD,

Having promised you, previous to my intended political expedition to the Northern Pole* to visit those shady scenes of Monastic Grandeur in which you are immersed; perhaps you will be surprized at not having received before this period some signs of my existence in these worldly regions.

My silence is not reprehensible—Idleness is not the cause—nor has the shrine of friendship to condemn or reclaim the votary. Since my curious overturn in Piccadilly I have been confined to my room, and am still

* The Marquis was sent in 1806 as Ambassador to the Court of St. Petersburg.



~~SUSAN EUPHEMIA, DUCHESS OF HAMILTON~~
THOMAS PHILLIPS

no: Love Enthusiast!!!
By permission of the Duke of Hamilton

LOUISIA?

suffering from the cruel effects of my fall. Some tutelary Angel must have been at hand at that critical moment, and have snatched me from the realms of futurity. For what purpose? Heaven knows. If I could flatter myself, but we are no longer in those brilliant days of yore, when individual achievements signalised individual exertion. The dark accumulated smoke now envelops the whole horizon, and blends everything in the general mass of impenetrable gloom, save where *appears* the splendour of *one Country* or the *stupidity of many*.

We are now talking of nothing but the Russian Peace, whilst all the wise Politicians of St. Stephen's with angry and mysterious countenances are inveighing against the Successor of the *once magnanimous* Paul, for having so *basely* anticipated the avowed wish of the Cabinet of St. James's—I smile at our National Simplicity and exclaim, “whilst the Senate (that sink of general corruption and self interest) is at once the Divinity and Oracle of a *Premier's* Devotion; whilst the success of an election is to be the thermometer of national warmth, and the appointment of a place the guide and arbiter of Continental politics, we must ever remain the deluded Dupe of European negotiations.”

I am rather melancholy—the Northern politics have assumed a very different appearance since my Nomination to St. Petersburg, and if the change of Cartousky is not the forerunner of others of a similar nature (as I shrewdly suspect) I shall ere long from inaction be frozen into a Pillar of Ice. Would to Heaven that I could go directly to the *Spring* and centre of all present negotiations, instead of making so tedious and long a deviation from the road. I have hinted my wish here and I have engaged (*entre nous soit dit*) some of the Satellites now moving within the influence of this Maggior Piseta del secolo to induce it to shine benignly upon an old acquaintance. I am pretty confident that a ray of light will not be withheld from me, and yet without some friendly collision it may still want its creative powers.

When we last met you were kind enough to say that my little all would willingly receive me before my journey to the North. As soon as I am well enough I hope to profit of your kindness, and shall gladly repair to your Holy Sanctuary. I wish after these pestilential gales to

enhale for a moment the pure health of Heaven, within three shady volumes of accumulated virtue, let me identify myself with every breeze, wander among those solemn pines, reply to the rustling murmurs, and gazing on the varying tints of animated Nature forget the World and forgive it.

But, my dear Friend, these are not the joys now declined for my devoted head. Futurity, my courage would fail me were her dispensations open to my view—one thing however I should find—that I not only am but ever shall be

Yours most affly., etc., etc.,

July 29th, 1806.

GROSR. PLACE.

D. & C.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* THE MARQUIS OF DOUGLAS

Do not imagine, my dear Douglas, that I have remained in stupid ignorance of your progress to recovery. Almost every day have I heard from my faithful Francis how you were going on.

Feeling the most sincere, I might add the most enthusiastic friendship for you, all my anxieties have been alive upon your account.

I am not surprised at the sort of interposition which seems to have rescued you from danger.

You have a Guardian Angel, and are reserved (so my interior Soul tells me) for all that is good and great. If I did not believe so, I should think still more deeply of our political Situation. The Russian News was exactly what I looked for, with a just and prophetic eye you seemed contemplating when we last conversed together.

My intelligence from Paris long since gave me to understand what is now passing. More will pass, unless such a mind as yours, pure, generous, unprejudiced and fervid, is turned into its proper current, not bound up in the regions of Ice and Nullity.

I hope to God you will be soon sufficiently recovered to fulfil your affectionate promise of passing a few quiet days in this solitude.

If I could but transport you hither without too many



ALEXANDER, TENTH DUKE OF HAMILTON, K.T.
SIR HENRY RAEBURN

By permission of the Duke of Hamilton

jolts and irritations, I could answer for the good effect the aromatic air of our pine forests would produce upon your nerves and spirits.

Adieu for the moment, my dear Douglas,
Believe me invariably
and affectionately yours,

FONTHILL ABBEY, 1st August, 1806.

W. B.

Beckford had a great respect for his son-in-law. "I speak without partiality," he declared enthusiastically in 1838 to Cyrus Redding, "when I say that there are few of a more correct taste, or more capable of giving an opinion upon literary subjects than the Duke. He is reserved by nature; but you will hear what a discriminating perception he possesses. I have marked passages [in the 'Episodes' of 'Vathek'] for alteration at his suggestion, and I have great confidence in the soundness of his judgment. He has written nothing. Men of rank, who live at ease, will seldom encounter the toil of writing. There may be talent and inclination without ardour to overcome labour." The Duke, like Beckford, was an enthusiastic collector of books and paintings and statuary; and his chief characteristic—and this taste, too, was common to both men—was intense pride of race. He held it as an article of faith that as the descendant of the Regent Arran he was the true heir to the throne of Scotland: in his later days he became obsessed by the idea of his royal descent, and, so that his blood should not be contaminated by any admixture with that of lower quality, in 1843 he practically ordered his son to marry the Princess Marie Amélie, youngest daughter of the Grand Duke of Baden, and cousin of the Emperor Napoleon III.—an alliance that proved most unhappy. It was one of Beckford's greatest regrets, though he rarely made any allusion to it, that he had no heir: and perhaps it was this feeling that strengthened his affection for his grandson, whom he

described as "a very fine young man with very many noble qualities, and, withal, without a taint of affection." The Duke and Duchess often came with their children to Fonthill and, afterwards, to Lansdown, and Beckford was never happier than when he had them with him.

CHAPTER XIII

BECKFORD THE COLLECTOR

Beckford's fame as a collector : His first object books and manuscripts and choice bindings : His troubles with book-binders : His enthusiasm as a collector : His methods : His knowledge of pictures : His love of Raphael's works : Some criticisms : On the neglect of art by governments : His knowledge of prints : His attitude towards rival collectors : His dislike for Horace Walpole : The Strawberry Hill sale : His correspondence concerning the items he desired : His arrogance : His anger at any failure of his agent : His enthusiasm even in the last month of his life

NOT only as an author and as an eccentric has Beckford's name come down to posterity : he secured a fame as a collector that will preserve his memory for many generations to come. Books and manuscripts were the first objects of his ambition all the days of his life, and admirable was the discrimination he showed in his purchases ; not only were the volumes curious and interesting, but the bindings were choice and the names of former owners distinguished. He had books bearing the names or devices of Francis I., Henry II., Diane de Poitiers, Henry III., Henry IV., Marguerite de Navarre, Cardinal de Bourbon, Grolier, De Thou, Madame de Pompadour, Gerardot de Preford, Guyon de Sardière, Maioli, Lourinus, Thuanus, Retz, Soubin, and other distinguished persons ; and binding by every famous worker in his branch of art—Nicholas and Clovis Eve, De Rome, Le Monnier, Boyer, Simier, Le Gascon, Thouvenin, Montagu, Welcker, Desseuil, Padeloup, Bouzerian, Roger Payne, Kalthoeben, Baumgarten, Staggemeier, Charles Leuss, Johnson, Clarke, Bedford, and the rest.

Enthusiastic about fine bindings, it was a great trouble to him that he could find so few competent workmen among his contemporaries, and his comments on those whom he employed were as caustic as, to a later generation, they are amusing.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

You observe that the uncut "Tressau" will not injure by rebinding. The very sound of binding makes me shudder. The Brutes were all paid in full long since, but I have some notion that a sum of £31 is still owing to Beast Wilson, who would have been long since at the Regent's Park Zoological, etc., were I empowered to make out the mandamus—cursed Brute who lost a precious scrap of unpaid puffery from the "Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters," he had to bind! . . . To Beast Wilson adieu for evermore! But whether I shall say all hail! to Beast Smith or the other Brute you mention I cannot determine yet.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

Your present Brutes are ten times more negligent, lazy, and brutal than any of the former ones. It is impossible—for me, at least—to bear with such perverse, insolent, and almost unaccountable beastliness!

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

I send two very curious and extremely rare little books, to be placed, with strong recommendations, in angelic hands. The "Piedra Gloriosa" (with plates by Rembrandt), to be bound in the finest blue Morocco-joints, etc., in the style of Bunyan, only with a few delicate lines of gold. The "Æsopi Fabulæ," in brown calf, pannelled, etc., as like the original binding as possible—in both cases kept large and rough-gilt accordingly. . . . I recommend the Angel to do his best, and in his best style.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, 8 June, 1839.

Mr. Beckford has selected the following. . . . I am in no hurry to bind or even letter any of these—a voice is continually crying in my ears,

Bind no more
MacClarke has murdered binding.

Did you not announce in a former letter another volume of mine bound by the same bungling hand? It will accompany the next cargo, I suppose.

Beckford had a magnificent library of books of travel, and a fine collection of Aldines and Elzevirs, and he was always anxious to add to the latter. “Was the Elzevir *Cæsar* so very fine, so very tall?” he inquired of Clarke after a sale. “If it was I wish you had tried for it. Giving a lift to Elzevirs is politic, as we have so supreme a stock.” This shows that Beckford was a practical collector, and the proof of his success in this direction is that when the Beckford library was dispersed by auction in 1882–3 it realised £73,551 18s., a sum, it is supposed, that showed a handsome profit on its outlay. A perusal of the catalogue is in itself a delight to the lover of books, and the collector was right who said, “such a sale has not occurred in England before within the memory of living man.”

To the amassing of his library Beckford devoted money and time without stint, he brought all his vast knowledge to bear, and a great enthusiasm, without which last all the rest are deprived of more than half their usefulness. Determination, and perseverance, and tact, he devoted to the service. “When in Spain I saw a Murillo (the subject of which was St. John asleep, with angels in the background tending his sheep) in a distinguished prelate’s collection,” he told a friend, when gossiping of old times.

"I was anxious to possess it. The pious possessor would listen to no offer. Neither my money nor my entreaties could move him. I returned to England; found a pile of books of a very curious kind in one of my lumber-rooms; took them back with me to Spain, and the holy man could not resist them. We made an exchange. I got the Murillo, and he the books." The correspondence printed in this chapter shows the interest he took in his collections until the day of his death.

When Beckford was living at Bath, he had generally to rely upon the reports of his agents, but when he came to London he never missed the opportunity to call on the dealer in books and prints. Early in the morning he would sally forth from his house in Park Street to visit a few friends, and then would go to the booksellers and print-sellers. He always went in his carriage, taking with him a great roll of banknotes, for it was his custom to pay at once for everything he bought, and to take it away with him. He would offer a fair price for a picture, a print, or a book, and, having implicit faith in his judgment, could never be induced to pay more. If the dealer refused the offer, Beckford would without more ado abandon the purchase; but while he was not niggardly in his tender, the sum he mentioned was his ultimatum. Every one who dealt in the best pictures and in choice books knew him well, and so great was his knowledge that sometimes these articles were shown to him for no other purpose than to learn from his offer their worth. Mr. Frith remembers seeing him one day at Phillips', the Bond Street dealer, who was exhibiting a Holy Family, attributed by many to Raphael, though admittedly of doubtful authenticity. Beckford looked at the picture, and then, murmuring in language of which the following gives but a faint idea, "That d—d thing a Raphael! Great Heavens, think of that now! Can there be such d—d fools as to believe that a Raphael! What a d—d fool I was to come here!" and, without a glance at the

other pictures in the gallery, the wrathful old man departed.*

Beckford was the proud possessor of the St. Catherine of Raphael, now in the National Gallery, and his enthusiasm for that great work knew no bounds. "Behold that—ah! ah!" he said to a friend who came to see him at Bath. "Oh, gracious heaven—is she not beautiful? What a mouth!—look at the corners of that mouth!—no impure twistings—all purity; and the eyes—those eyes that seem to be looking into the very countenance of our divine Saviour with such a holy devotion. There, there, now you see what Raphael is! It is one of the very sweetest heads Raphael ever painted. I know of none so beautiful, except in his picture of the 'Perla.' But the finest of all Raphael's productions is the 'Spasimo,' which is in the Escorial; yes, it is finer than the 'Transfiguration' as we know it, for I saw it at Paris with a swarm of picture-cleaners (those skimmers of pictures), cleaning and scraping, and making spots on it like a group of bluebottle-flies; besides, there was a hole in the centre which was filled up. The Redeemer is very fine, but infinitely inferior to our Lord, as portrayed in the 'Spasimo,' who is bowed down to the earth by the weight of His cross and His sufferings, but in the expression of whom, Raphael has made visible an inward satisfaction over pain, that He is yet to save the world." To the same visitor, an artist, he insisted upon the necessity of studying the engravings of Mark Antonio. "It is here," he said, "that we can find Raphael pure—for even where his pictures have been saved from the scarifying of picture cleaners—still the varnish has been laid on coat after coat, or the dirt eaten in so as to much impair the delicate little touches—and it is these which give that perfection to his works. The greatest number of his pictures were commenced by his pupils, especially by Julio Romano; Raphael then

* W. P. Frith, "My Autobiography and Reminiscences," vol. ii. p. 131.

came and put the finishing touches, but if pearl-ashes, vinegar, and spirits of wine, are employed, Raphael is quacked to death, and Julio Romano peeps into the world half born."

Besides Bellini's "Doge of Venice" he had in his collection two Vernets and Claude Lorraine's "Christ appearing to Mary Magdelene in the Garden," upon which last he commented, "It is a vile composition, and except for that peculiar and happy hue, like the bloom on a fresh-gathered plum, so exclusively Claude's, and which you find here purer than I ever saw it before, I would not keep the picture an hour." He possessed the two famous Claudes from the Altieri Collection, portraits of himself and his daughters by Romney, and Benjamin West's "King Lear," for which he had a profound admiration. "See how Lear's nostril is inflated, like an Arab in a thunderstorm. I solemnly declare the figure of Lear is as fine as the 'Saviour,' and the tone is as fine as fine can be. Who could suppose that the genius who had conceived and executed this, could have painted such a wretched daub as his picture of 'The Sick brought before Christ' in the National Gallery. Oh, good God! he must have been inspired when he painted this—there's drama, expression, drawing, everything." He had water-colour sketches of Fonthill Abbey by Turner, but the later works of that artist he could not appreciate. "He paints now as if his brain and imagination were mixed up on his palate with soapsuds and lather. One must be born again to understand his pictures." On Sir Thomas Lawrence he pronounced judgment: "He is a dandy artist; he paints *à la* Almaek; not but what his pictures of the Pope and John Kemble are very fine. I mean the small picture of John Kemble as Hamlet. . . . He will go to purgatory for painting his Satan invoking his legions. Could anything be more dreadful?" Though he had a very qualified respect for Lawrence as a painter, for the same artist as a collector he entertained a very different feeling, and, when

Lawrence died in 1830, was desirous to purchase the drawings of Michael Angelo and Raphael he had brought together; but the price was £22,000, and Beckford, who was spending money freely at Lansdown, could not spare this sum at the moment. He was strongly of opinion that the collection should be purchased for the nation, and lamented that, with the exception of a handful of people, there was in England no sound taste for the arts. "Collections are made from ostentation by people of wealth, who do not know a good from a bad picture. The government is not sensible of the value of art to the nation. It will lavish money upon anything else, but it grudges money for the arts. A minister picks a committee of taste out of the House of Commons, as he would a committee for any other purpose, and his committee does nothing but blunder. There must be a feeling for art—mere admiration won't do—people admire, and affect to be struck with works of art, because others affect the same thing, just as an opera audience cries, 'Wonderful!' at a performance of which it does not comprehend a syllable. The beauty of art must be inwardly felt—the mind in it must be read, interpreted. There is Raphael—he is at the head of painting everybody says—his pictures it is safe to admire and applause. Ask why Raphael is the prince of painters—they cannot tell you. Now an Italian amateur of the lowest order will explain all this, and more. A just taste for art is a cultivated taste; there is no royal road to it, as too many think there is."

When money was not so plentiful with him, Beckford perforce abandoned the purchase of paintings and instead devoted his attention to prints, to the acquisition of which he brought the same enthusiasm. His knowledge of prints and etchings was as sound as his knowledge of pictures; he could at once detect a copy from an original, and he knew all the private marks of the artists and the great collectors. He brought together a fine collection of engravings of Albert Dürer, Amman, Callot, Faithorne,

Bartolozzi, and Blake; but the great feature was a fine series of five hundred engraved works of Van Dyck in the earliest states, that at the sale of 1882-3 realised no less than £2850. "Few collectors," he said with truth, "are so nice about impression as myself."

It was not Beckford who, when a rival collector outbid him at an auction sale, declared, "I'll have that book when the collection is sold at your death"; but this was the spirit that animated him, and he had a fine hatred as well as a healthy contempt for all dealers and collectors who interfered with his projects. Indeed, in his last years his attitude towards others became one of unmitigated intolerance. At the Strawberry Hill sale Mary Berry wished to buy a piece of Japan that had been hers, and, thinking it would go for £4 or £5 she asked a friend to buy it. To her dismay she was called upon to pay over £60. She made inquiries as to the opponent who had run up the price and found it was Henry George Bohn bidding on behalf of Beckford. To the latter she wrote, offering to let him have the piece at the price of his last bid, only to receive the reply that, "The Old Man of the Mountain will not take the article, and wishes to make Miss Berry pay for her impudence in opposing him."* The story may be apocryphal, anyhow in this form, for Mitford, who tells it, cannot be trusted to be impartial when writing of Beckford; but it may be regarded as typical of Beckford's attitude towards his opponents. His rage knew no bounds when he was outbid, as the correspondence of his later years shows: the very name of Henry Martin Bohn made the same impression on him that a red rag has on a bull.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN [1832].

Admirable! We shall teach them the immense value of some of the worst books from the F[onthill] Library in

* J. Mitford: "Unpublished Note Books" (B. M., Add. MSS. 32566, p. 34).

time. The scrawled Euripides was *nobly* paid for by Bohn, and the Ramble, etc., most extravagantly by H.H.H. Stick to them—open their pores—and then, just in time, the nipping front. You must struggle *most vigorously* for the Herodian, which drop at a brimming price if you can work them up to it by eager looks and gestures. 608 must be ours, unless they choose to pay a more than Thorpian price for De Thou. If you are caught, never mind upon this occasion; it is a respectable book in itself, and, if in fine and perfect condition, truly desirable. 610 the Cherub styles beautiful, and beautifully will he set at you, I make no doubt. . . . When you can give them a rap, rap hard!

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN [1833].

You must set at Bohn with more virulence than ever. Let him hear the crack of your whip upon every occasion. The droppings upon Thorpe, Cimitelli, etc., were judicious and well merited. *Pursue them all to the death!* No quarter! The bloody flag waving continually above their heads! £16 for the stained, probably trumpery, MSS! Admirable! . . . Chatterton I have no particular predilection for but being a Fonthill they will set at you—in that case **MAKE THEM PAY!** . . . Look sharp, and they may become flat. I am for punishing them when I can, and would do so in the best style of the *Fancy* should an opportunity offer. My fist and my horsewhip are both longing to get at them. . . . I would have the Brute and his followers trampled upon like dirty rugs and beaten like dusty carpets. . . . You have not allowed, I suppose, the fine copy of Dumont in green morocco to drop into one of the set's lap too quickly? One hundred nicely executed drawings given up to Bohn for £5 10s.! For £5 10s. to Bohn!! to Bohn for £5 10s.!!! Grant me patience, gracious Heaven! One hundred drawings to Bohn for £5 10s.! To Bohn!! To Bohn!!! I shall never recover this stroke. It is worse than the palsy.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN, October, 1833.

So, then, our inveterate opponent in book battles [*i.e.* Henry Martin Bohn] has been removed to another existence, it appears, rather suddenly. Did he die by the pop of a pistol, the slash of a razor, or the too frequent visitation of the bottle? Who now will the Goliath of Bedford Street, Covent Garden, get to back him blindfold, through foul and fair, thick and thin? . . . The papers tell us the immense accumulation of books of all sorts and sizes, ventiplicates and centiplicates, are amply sufficient to furnish a 365 days' sale! To avoid the oppressive indigestible glut I wish Parliament would decree this worthy a Roman funeral, and having commanded his well-spiced, port-soaken carcass to be placed on the top of a Martinish-looking pile composed of his entire collection, brought forth from all their filthy sinks and dirty corners, foreign and domestic, ordain the whole to be reduced to ashes.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

A variorum Rabelais was much lauded in one of the Cherub's puffs. Pity you passed it by without calling my attention to so fine and useful a book! It fell cheap to that pest Cimitelli, one of the Cherub's right-beloved, right-trusted, and right-frequently-smiled-upon adherents. Lucky for him that I am at Bath! Were I in the way no opportunity should be neglected of making him pay exorbitantly. I owe him many and many a grudge for assisting the sweet kind Cherub in *setting at me* on various occasions! O that I had been upon the field! How I would have worked them!

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

I wish the cholera would visit Prince Cimitelli and break up both him and his collection. I abhor the very sound of his churchyardish sort of a name! [Of] Many and many a fine volume, and many and many a sterling pound has that brilliant ornament of the Cherub's paradise deprived me.

Beckford hated Horace Walpole as only one collector can hate another, and his feelings towards him never underwent any change. Two score years after the great letter-writer had been buried, Beckford unburdened himself of his sentiments towards the owner of what he called "the toyshop of Strawberry Hill" in the course of a conversation with Cyrus Redding. "Walpole hated me," he said. "I began Fonthill two or three years before his death. Mischief-making people annoyed him by saying I intended to buy up all his nic-nackery when he was dead. Some things I might have wished to possess—a good deal I would not have taken as a gift. The place was a miserable child's box—a species of gothic mousetrap—a reflection of Walpole's littleness. I happened to be adding to the Fonthill collection of pictures at the time, and was made a bugbear of. Mr. Damer and Lord Waldgrave may thank me for their legacy. My having his playthings he could not tolerate, even in idea, so he bequeathed them beyond my reach, as he not improbably surmised. . . . He built everything upon family honours and gossip—his writings are portraits of himself. He would have abused my heraldic emblazonments at Fonthill. He was full of spleen. He would have written and talked me and my buildings down to the ground—yet he affected the philosopher."

The Strawberry Hill collections were at last, in 1842, put upon the market, and Beckford, then eighty-two years of age, plunged delightedly into the fray, "all agog, all ardour, all intrepidity," as he expressed it. Well might the *Morning Post* say that he had been "laying about him with all the vigour of youth"! The first rumours of the Strawberry Hill sale reached him in a letter from Henry George Bohn, the son of his old antagonist, who now bought for him in the place of Clarke.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

Monday, 6th July, 1840.

The Claudes are not vanity "morceaux," but highly instructive and interesting to me, so I am quite satisfied. Had I been at your elbow, Sir, — should not have carried off the musée drawing.

I now return the portfolio, having made my selection. Barnard's Stanier in my russia-bound book is inferior to yours, which I therefore retain.

The Fries volumes may boast of all your *very fine* Vandyck rarities, with the addition of the *original* etching of Titian and his Bonaroba.

I am most grateful, my dear sir, for your clear, intelligent information about S[trawberry] Hill, and ardently wish a sale would give me an opportunity of profiting by it; but alas! this marvellous sale still remains enveloped in such *dense clouds*, that I doubt whether the potency of Magnus Apollo, G. Robins himself, will be able to dispel them.

Pray inform —, who, I am happy to find, understands the immutable etiquette of the court of Lansdown Bagdad, that I purchased the Perugino of Pizzetta (a famous picture scraper) some twenty or thirty years ago. He told me it came directly from Perugia, but from what church or collection took decent care not to certify.

The price mentioned, viz., 800, is correct.

In case you should pay the S[trawberry] H[ill] collection another visit, favour me with a few more observations. I only wish in the last instance they had extended to several pages.

In corresponding with you, my dear sir, I shall never call, "hold, enough." *

Impatiently Beckford waited for the catalogue of the Strawberry Hill sale; and when it came studied it carefully, and discharged at Bohn's devoted head a very fusillade of letters, the burden of which was, "above all things do not relax in attention to Strawberry Hill."

* Cyrus Redding: "Memoirs of William Beckford," vol. ii. p. 374.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN *

I propose coming to town very shortly, and hope we shall meet next Wednesday, 9th, for "despatch of business" between the hours of 4 and 5.

You will find me all agog, ALL ARDOUR, ALL INTREPIDITY.

The S[trawberry] Hill wonderment is so much upon the decline, having been written down by the *Times* and other papers most vigorously, that I should not be surprised if good bargains were to be met with on the day of trial.

No doubt you have *scrutinously* gone through and through all the portfolios; your observations would be highly acceptable.

Are not the HeΩlogias, Lots 100 † and 102, ‡ remarkably fine? I doubt whether mine are as good.

117.—Views of London, &c.: § called very curious. Are they so?

8th day, 128.—A strange *omnium gatherum*, Wilton Gardens, Colleart, &c., || and what say you to 129, Brantome, Mariette, &c.? ¶

6th day, 46.**—I hope the little Callot will not turn

* The notes to this and the following letter are copied word for word from the catalogue of the Strawberry Hill sale.

† Holland's "HeΩlogia Anglica," folio, with very fine impressions of the plates, from the library of R. Thoresby, very rare (1 vol.). Knocked down to Lilly, £3 3s.

‡ Holland's "HeΩlogia," and with the second part the lives and portraits of the Foreign Reformers, folio, very fine impressions of the plates (1 vol.). Knocked down to Lilly, £3 12s. 6d.

§ A collection of Views of London and its Environs, oblong 4to, very curious, from the Library of A. C. Ducarel, and a collection of Plates, by Cochin, 4to, very curious (2 vols.). Knocked down to H. G. Bohn (for Beckford), £3 10s.

|| An oblong 4to vol. of prints, by Galle, on Gardening, ditto of Wilton Gardens, and ditto of prints engraved by Colleart and Galle (3 vols.). Knocked down to Captain Leckie-Graves, £4 6s.

¶ A small folio volume containing 180 prints, portraits of illustrious persons in France. This volume belonged to the celebrated Brantôme; the several notes are inscribed by him, from the collection of Mariette of Paris. Knocked down to — Newton, Esq., for £2 5s.

** Callot's Pocket Book, a small oblong volume, in black morocco, with beautiful drawings by this very rare master, and a small volume containing Prints by Callot, representing the History of the Prodigal Son, the Miseries of War, &c. (2 vols.). Knocked down to the Right Hon. Thos. Grenville, £43 1s.

out *populous*, but even if it does, it must not *escape me*—pray take good care of that. Remember to put aside for me an architectural drawing by Perino del Vaga, with statues in niches; think of me when any drawings of this kind turn up. I have some already of this class, very fine.

62, 8th day.*—A folio of prints, &c., from the antique, in the Cabinet de Girardon, *I must have*. The impressions are good, particularly the portrait,—it is scarce—MISS IT NOT.

If you have leisure to delve deep into the round tower ruin, many and many interesting odds and ends (in my way) may be picked up.

After all, such an opportunity as this may not occur again in a hurry.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, 17 April, 1842.

Depend upon it, my dear Sir, there are many, very many books at S[trawberry] Hill well worthy of yr. attention—not one of the lots marked should I like to miss. The P. Knight†—the Hunter coin‡—the Spencer Lenore§—the Maison de Gondi—very old morocco—the Historic Doubts, illus^d—with MSS. notes||—the effects of gardening,¶ ditto.

* A folio of splendid prints from the antiques in the cabinet of Gerardon, the celebrated French sculptor, very scarce (1 vol.). Knocked down to Beckford (in his own name), £2 15s.

† Richard Payne Knight's "Account of the Worship of Priapus," 4to, elegant red morocco, a present from the author. See a note in the fly-leaf by H(orace) W(alpole), extremely rare. Knocked down to Sir Thomas Phillips, £22 1s.

‡ "Numorum Veterum Populorum, et Urbium qui in Museo Gulielmi Hunter," 4to, with fine plates of coins, bound in morocco, with manuscript notes. Knocked down to Bohn (for Beckford), £3 15s.

§ Burgher's "Leonora," translated from the German, by W. R. Spencer, Esq., with prints, from the designs of Lord D. Beaucherc, elegantly bound in morocco, folio. Knocked down to Bohn (for Beckford), £2 2s.

|| "Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.," by Horace Walpole, 4to, illustrated with prints and drawings, and manuscript notes, and bound in calf. Knocked down to Bohn (for Beckford), £3 10s.

¶ "An Essay on Modern Gardening," by Horace Walpole, and translated into French by the Duc de Nivernois, 4to, illustrated with prints, drawings, and manuscript notes, and bound in calf. Knocked down to Bohn (for Beckford), £2 5s.

I regret giving you so much trouble, being well aware of the value of your time, but this sale interests me so very much that I cannot avoid again and again calling yr. attention to it. If the books come to town and are better catalogued, the task will be less irksome.

It would be tedious to give further lists of the items Beckford desired to purchase at this sale, or to enumerate those that fell to his agent's bids. The following letters contain all that is of general interest.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, *Saty.*,
3d May, 1842.

We have paid quite dear enough for *every* article—The banquet being over—now comes the reckoning. Have the goodness, therefore, to send the books and the account that I may settle it immediately.

I [wish to] forget the egregious follies committed at this high-puff sale.

I am ever yrs, my dear Sir, most cordially,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, *Friday*,
5 May, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,

The Strawberry Hill cargo reached its destination yesterday eve. In Lot 165, which ought to contain 4 articles, I found only 3—so that the scarce additions to the postscript are wanting—this is the result of hurry and inexactitude—some more active person has probably picked it out of the lot (of which it was the gem) during or after the sale.

I now enclose £150—which clears the S[trawberry] Hill acc^t, and as I prepaid the books in separate parcel, this leaves a little balance in your favour to be pd. in our next acc^t.

Puffery and blowing will proceed in the same style all the two days' sale. The cloud of venomous insects will

pursue us with equal virulence—Hornet Thorpe at their head. The Theatre will be changed—not the actors; but I am in hopes that yr. personal attendance may be of some use. I shall be cautious, however, in multiplying correspondence, having smarted severely.

In full expectation that you will not fail to despatch the Cat[alogue] and your *report* of Chantrey's books—Saturday by post, or Sunday by special parcel,

I am ever, believe me, consistently
and cordially yrs.,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANS^DN, Friday,
20th May, 1842.

Mr. Beckford will be happy to look at the *Æsops* the moment it suits Mr. Bohn's convenience to send them off.—

S[trawberry] Hill has given Mr. Beckford a confirmed "nausea" for puffed sales. . . . Little impromptus with catalogues (at the 11th hour) are far preferable.

Mr. Beckford is very glad to learn that *all* arrived safe, and is grateful for this fresh instance of very agreeable punctuality.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

23rd May, 1842.

I wonder how long the rod intended for our shoulders is to remain in pickle—when will soaking and vamping be completed?

Should the Dog star and Duke star* continue to rage, and the hornets follow us from the S[trawberry] Hill round-house to the metropolitan scene of auction with freshly pointed strings and renewed virulence, inflammation must ensue, as it did that miserable day when the Callots I had so right entirely set my *whole* heart upon,

* This is an allusion to the picture of the Duke of Suffolk, and Mary, Queen of France, purchased at a preposterous price by the Duke of Bedford at the Strawberry Hill sale.

were ravished away from me, to my *utter surprise* and *infinite* annoyance.

Have you discovered *yet* into whose hands they have *really* fallen? I shall *never* cease regretting them most bitterly,—*never!*—*never!* 50 or 60 guineas are more easily found than such genuine, mellow impressions as were contained in the little greasy bit of a second volume, or such truly original sketches as rendered the first one of the daintiest morsels that ever excited my appetite.

I hope, ere long, to receive the five days Catalogue, with your observations upon it.

Yours ever, &c.

W. BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN *

LANSDOWN, *Tuesday, 30th May, 1842.*

I can easily conceive the majesty displayed by my glorious Apollo upon this great occasion.

Though I regret the Callots, I have *not a word to say against* your having dropped them (probably at the nick of time) upon another mirror of impudence, the eternal T[horpe].

I trust the Dog star may cease raging with such violence before the print portion of the sale comes on.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, *31st May, 1842.*

I return the portfolio *intact*: the Hollars I particularly fancy are here already, and so are most of the Faithornes.

I dread the impending Robins-ism. God knows how we shall fare, but I keep up my spirits as well as I can. The S[trawberry] H[ill] treasures (just arrived) are safe in Lansdown tower.

When you see the Lansdown Hollars, (which I sincerely hope you will, one day or other), you will be convinced, I think, my dear sir, that the S[trawberry Hill] are a little too black and brilliant.

* Cyrus Redding: "Memoirs of William Beckford," vol. ii. p. 378.

I grow more and more nervous every hour, when I reflect upon the ferocious mad-bull tossings we may expect at the next Strawberry conflict.

My vocation for Papes and Elstrackes is not sufficiently fervent to conquer the disgust, the nausea, the abhorrence with which the last S[trawberry] H[ill] proceedings have inspired me. The fine portraits specified in your choice little list are absolutely beyond my reach, nor shall I stand on tiptoe to reach them.

Girardon?—yes—and now and then a crumb or two of comfort which you may possibly pick up.

I must quiet myself with my humble impressions as well as I can. The hot sun and the blighting east winds are drying up both myself and my territories; the change upon Lansdown in the space of the last four or five days is frightful.

Measles, influenza, &c., are playing the devil in this neighbourhood, and every other. I really think poor Lord Bungleton, who swung himself out of this fussy world t'other day, has the best of it. Keep yourself as cool as you can in every respect, my dear Sir, and don't commit any feverish extravagancies.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, *Thursday, June 16, 1842.*

MY DEAR SIR,

That you have made a good selection I make no doubt; that I shall be much pleased to look them over whenever you please to send a few specimens down, is equally certain; and that the horrible heat of Robins' Hell-antechamber may not force you to commit high flown extravagancies, equally to be supplicated.

Sift and resift the Vertues; he interests me particularly. I glory in his pen drawing of Philip and Mary. Curious proofs, curious views, curious scraps of antiquities, are well suited to this very original-looking abode, which reminds one of some of his favourite old palatial mansions. Remember Perino del Vaga, &c., when the drawings come on. I shall be curious to learn what you discover in that department.

Although I am not *mad* after Papes and Elstrackes, I

am not dead to print feeling, and should be thankful for a few grains of information how you are getting on.

I see by the *Morning Post's* unceasing Strawberriana, that a well-known "true collector" has been laying about him with all the vigour of youth.

Do not forget that I am extremely partial to Vertue, and should anything very interesting by him present itself. I should like to see it very much.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, *Saturday*,
30 July, 1842.

Not a spark of S[trawberry] Hill mania remains in my bosom—nor are my expectations from the [*illegible*] sale sufficiently lively to encourage any bursts of extravagance—I have looked on the Cat[alogue], just arrived, but find nothing to tempt me—not a single miscellaneous article.—

Believe me, my dear Sir,
with sincere thanks for yr. attentions,
very cordially yours,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

Beckford's great success as a collector, which made him intolerant towards his rivals, led him occasionally to a display of arrogance, as the following extracts from some letters show.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, 21 April, 1842.

As you have not yet found a stray moment to vouchsafe me an atom of information concerning the Missal sale at Fletcher's, I conclude it contains nothing sufficiently rare to enter my Tabernacle.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MR. EDMONDS, at Mr.
H. G. Bohn's

25 April, 1842.

Between colds from the atmosphere and Heats from the turmoil of too much occupation I cannot obtain the

information required. I wish Mr. Edmonds would let me know what sort of a sale took place at Fletcher's—if the *MSS.* were really so fine. I have been strangely neglected.—I desired Mr. Bohn to send me Chantrey's Cat[alogue,] which it is still to be hoped he will take care to do.

LANSDOWN, 2 May, 1842.

The *not sending* Fletcher's cat[alogue] occasioned me the loss of the fine Missal. Had the proprietors sent it for my inspection, it wd. have been returned with a thumping commission. The volume would have been *mine*—or the thrifty good bargain-maker you permitted to carry it off wd. have had the misery of paying 300 guineas more for it. Such is the result of *neglect*! Alas! alas! it grieves me to say so, but in the long run of my collection I never experienced so glaring an instance!

LANSDOWN, 3d. May, 1842.

The Fletcher people were ignorant fools indeed for not submitting their grand missal to my inspection.—Did they never hear of such a place as Lansdown Tower?

Beckford's custom was well worth having by any dealer, but the man who was fortunate enough to secure it had to work hard to keep it. He was most exacting in his demands, and expected constant attention. "Cargoes," as he called them, of books must constantly be sent to him with full particulars of the items included in it.

H. G. BOHN to WILLIAM BECKFORD

4 YORK ST., COVENT GARDEN.
July 13, 1839.

SIR,

I have this day sent for your inspection a small box of books of an interesting and very uncommon kind. Unfortunately they nearly all want binding, having no covers whatever. If you select any, it would be better to send them to town for binding, and endeavour to forget them till they are returned to you, which may be *one* month or *three*, according to the caprice of the binder. The books are in so much the finer state, for the want of

binding, on account of their having been cut out of volumes, by the former proprietor,—the same person who collected the last lot sent for your inspection. He has one of the best bibliographical noses in Europe, and the present is, I believe, his last gleanings. The *Pilgrims* is a singularly rare and interesting article, and the only copy I ever saw: it cost me nearly the £10 10s. 0d. at Sotheby's, where all the books were distributed. At the same sale I bought the Wendelin Bible, in fair state, for £10 10s. 0d., which once used to sell for 100 gs.—so that it is evident tastes are changing.

The MS. *Journey to Bath*, unpublished, was bought at the sale of Dr. Conybeare's books, and I should have given £5 5s. 0d. for it (altho' charged only £3 3s. 0d.) rather than disappoint myself of the pleasure of securing it for your inspection.

The books are all so rare and curious, and withal so interesting, that I think you will find it more difficult to reject than accept.

An invoice is enclosed in the box.

I remain,

Your most oblig^d

Humble Serv^t,

HENRY G. BOHN.

Beckford at Bath, to judge from his correspondence, seems unceasingly to have studied catalogues, and, himself never overlooking anything great or small, when anything escaped his agent's notice, letters of remonstrance were sure to follow.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN [1832?].

Have you seen "Illustrations of the Bible," by Martin, No. 1? Send me "Tales from the German of Tieck"—Moxon—and another sort of tale, "The Cat's Tail," with etchings by G. Cruikshank. These would have been better worth pointing out for light summer reading than Murray's volumes. I wonder they did not occur to you. How lucky that I have a quick eye, and can read whole *Atlas* columns of newspaper advertisements, etc., at one glance!

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN [1832 ?].

You have been making, no doubt, a pretty mess, an excellent hash, a capital stew; that I can easily imagine. Indeed I was partly led to expect it. But that in the intervals of cookery you should not have found a few stray moments to send me, if not books, at least excuses, is more than puzzling—it is confusion ten times worse confounded! It is deplorable, shameful, half-witted, stupid, and owlish, to an excess I never conceived possible. Not being myself, I hope, “The howling tenant of the sapless tree,” I shall neither mope nor screech. I am perfectly well disposed to treat with the most serene composure every degree of stupid inattention you can be guilty of, except in one instance—that which regards Mr. Scholl. Send him his copy. Do not push your miserable, impolitic, and disgustingly ungrateful conduct beyond all comprehension and beyond all endurance. If you have any explanation, any excuses to offer, come to Bath. I will allow you to do so. I should be loth even now, even after your ridiculous, wrongheaded (to use no harsher term) behaviour, to see your connection not only with me, but with Bentley, incurably blighted.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, Thursday, 7th July, 1842.

I am surprised, my dear Sir, that you have not written to me, upon the subject of the Kingsboro’ sale. From the enclosed scrap it appears to merit g[rea]t attention—procure and send me the Catalogue immediately. I fear we are too late—there is certainly no time to *lose*.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN, Monday, 28th Nov., 1842.

Mr. Beckford proposes coming to town the 5th or 6th of December, when he hopes to find his books, *so long* in the hands of incorrigible binders, completely finished.

He flatters himself also that Mr. H. G. Bohn will make up for his unaccountably protracted silence by a display of something worth looking at.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN,
14 March, 1843.

Mr. Beckford proposes coming to town next Monday the 20th; and in the meantime particularly desires Mr. Bohn will take the trouble of looking over a Rev. Mr. Daniel's books—on sale at Christie's, *Friday the 17th*. They are said to be in beautiful condition: some reports of them w[oul]d be therefore desirable. Catalogue, and answer if the books pleasing—no time to lose.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

13th April, 1843.

What! not a line! not a word about the Edinburgh sale? Where are the Flamens? the Grimaldis, the etc., etc., etceteras? All the echoes of Lansdown are repeating, "Where? where?"

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN,
13 Apl., 1843.

Southey's Library, replete with Spanish and Portuguese literature, is to be sold shortly at Leigh Sotheby's. Let me conjure you, my dear Sir, to be upon the watch and send me an early catalogue—My commissions are likely to be numerous as this collection interests me *very much*.

Ever Yrs. most cordially,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MR. SMITH, Lisle Street, London

LANSDOWN, 8th April, 1844

What! 30 and 40, and perhaps 50, for the set of *Naiwinex*! I am not disposed to pay so absurd a price for them, nor for the *Mill*, or *A. Dürer*, &c., &c. I shall not meddle with the fine *Ruysdael*, but if the nicely-toned *Teniers* turns out of a size to suit a place here, which I have in my eye, we must stretch a point to secure it. Be so kind as to send me the exact dimensions.

The French collection sounds stupendous. I am not partial to Desnoyer, but very much so to Edelinck, Bolswert, Andray, &c. Of Vandyke I have great plenty and good.

In the stubble field of the "refined Collector," something, and at no very extravagant cost, may probably be gleaned for me. What are the Elsheimers, 12 and 13, 1st day? 170, 366, 438 and 9, 447, 509, 511, 529, ornaments; 573 architectural. I have several compositions from the pen of the master of the household, but none, as yet, from the graver of the master of the mouse trap. . . . You have not yet reported the Breembergs at the great conservator's; pray do, and believe me, my dear sir,

Most constantly yours,

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to MR. SMITH

LANSDOWN, April 15, 1844.

There are several articles in the Dubois sale well worthy of being fastened upon, not mediocre uniques, but the productions of lofty minds; for example, 59, Bandit, after Poussin; 60, after Seb. Bourdon; 300, G. Edelinck, after P. de Champagne, sublime most probably; 212, Le Cavalier de la mort.

My St. Hubert is wretched; the first fine one should be secured whenever it turns up. 219, La Nativité, *très rare*. Q. Whether *très belle*?

It will be impossible for me to think of coming to town, therefore must depend upon your reports entirely.

Waiting the measurement of the Teniers, and observations upon the Breembergs, I am, my dear sir,

Most cordially,

W. B.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to H. G. BOHN

LANSDOWN

(22 April 1844).

Monday, 4 o'clock.

The Nodier; the Nodier!—I must have that Cat. by any means—and at any cost.—You have *carte blanche* to procure it. There appears *nothing* for me at Southey's—it is as dull as the luggage train—we are quit of our trouble there.

WILLIAM BECKFORD *to* H. G. BOHN*Tuesday, 23 April 1844.*

Our troubles are not at an end. This is not the sale catalogue—how yr. corresp^t is to make out my commissions at hap-hazard with the assistance of days, vacations, &c. I cannot conceive! Here they are—and you must enforce the attention of this cousin of yours in the most peremptory manner.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE SULTAN OF LANSDOWN TOWER" (1822-1837)

The sale of Fonthill Abbey : Bought by John Farquhar in 1822 : The contents sold by Farquhar in 1823 : The interest displayed by collectors : A skit on the sale : Hazlitt's attack on Beckford's taste : A defence of Beckford : The cost of building the Abbey : A disastrous lawsuit : Depreciation of property in Jamaica : Beckford's diminishing income : Bears the loss of the Abbey philosophically : Makes an offer for Prior Park, Bath : Buys houses in Lansdown Crescent : And land on Lansdown Hill : Erects another Tower : Beckford and rights of way : Description of his Bath residence and the Tower : His mode of life at Bath : A man of mystery : Absurd rumours concerning him : The dwarf Piero : His published books : His anonymous works : His unpublished manuscripts : Various editions of "Vathek" : The publication of "Italy, Spain, and Portugal," &c., and "Alcobaça and Batalha" : And correspondence concerning it : His annoyance at adverse criticisms : Lockhart's eulogistic review of the "Travels" : Beckford and Benjamin Disraeli

GREAT interest was aroused by the announcement made in 1822 by Christie, the auctioneer, that Fonthill was to be thrown open as a preliminary of a sale by auction, not only of the Abbey, but also of its contents. In July catalogues were issued, and within a few weeks no less than seventy-two thousand copies were disposed of at the price of a guinea each ; while to Fonthill flocked crowds of visitors eager to seize the opportunity to inspect the famous structure. The sale as advertised did not, however, take place, for Fonthill was purchased by private contract for £330,000 by John Farquhar.* Farquhar,

* John Farquhar (1751-1826) very properly has a niche in Timb's "English Eccentrics" as well as in the "Dictionary of National Biography." He went out to India as a cadet in the Bombay establishment, but, a wound incapacitating him for military service, he became a

though, bought it merely as a speculation, and in the following year the collections were sold by auction by Phillips between September 9 and October 29. Again there was much excitement, and again crowds travelled to Wiltshire. “He is fortunate who finds a vacant chair within twenty miles of Fonthill; the solitude of a private apartment is a luxury which few can hope for,” so runs an amusing article in the *Times*. “Falstaff himself could not *take his ease* at this moment within a dozen leagues of Fonthill. . . . The beds through the county are (literally) doing double duty—people who come in from a distance during the night must wait to go to bed until others get up in the morning. . . . Not a farmhouse—however humble—not a cottage near Fonthill, but gives shelter to fashion, to beauty, and rank; ostrich feathers, which, by their very waving, we can trace back to Piccadilly, are seen nodding at a casement window over a dispopulated poultry-yard.” The sale gave rise to numerous *jeux d’esprit*, and also to the following amusing skit, issued as a broadside and now extremely rare.*

FONTHILL SALE †

A Parody

Who has not heard of the Sale at Fonthill,
With its bijou the brightest that earth ever gave;

merchant at Bengal, and eventually secured the contract to supply gunpowder to the Government. In middle age he returned to England with about half a million, and this fortune he vastly increased by judicious investments. Though princely in his charities he lived and dressed as a poor man, and it is said that his household expenses only amounted to £200 out of his £30,000 or £40,000 a year. One of Farquhar’s executors said that on the second sale Fonthill did not realise more than £150,000, but this sum probably referred only to the contents of the estate, not to both.

* From the original in the possession of Mrs. Alfred Morrison.

† The chief part of this Fragment is in imitation, or rather parody, of the celebrated description of the Vale of Cashmere, in Moore’s “Light of the Harem,” beginning:

Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere

Its pictures and books—and its knights of the quill
 Who of all its attractions so ceaselessly rave?
 Oh, to see it at midday, when warm o'er the HALL
 Its full gathered splendour an autumn sun throws;
 Ere the smug auctioneer to his seat in his stall
 "Like a bride full of blushes" so smilingly goes:
 And punctual to time without stoppage or stammer,
 Reads his list of "Conditions" and raises his hammer.

When gems, bronzes and paintings are gleaming half shewn
 (Mr. Beckford's we mean—t'other half would not please, Sir)
 From tables of ebony—rosewood—and one
 Which they tell us belonged to the Prince of Borghese, Sir,
 But *geese* we should be all we hear thus to hug
 Since we know many come from the Prince of Humbug.
 Then to see all the China from Nankin and Dresden,
 The "rare Oriental" and "famed Japanese,"
 Mixed with all kinds of trumpery, but recently pressed in,
 Our judgements to dupe and our pockets to ease.
 With bronzes and boxes—*chefs-d'œuvre* of skill,—
 Made "to order" they say for the sale at Fonthill.
 Here the music of bidding grows loud and more loud;
 Here the *sweetener* is conning his hints for the day;
 And here by the rostrum, apart from the crowd,
 Billy Tims and his brethren are scribbling away
 (Striving who shall bedaub Mr. Phillips the most)
 Their puffs for the *Chronicle*, *Herald* and *Post*.
 Let us pause ere we blame, for 'tis well understood,
 Though some things are so-so, Harry's dinners are good,
 And since paying and feeding the piper's no jest,
 Sure they ought to play for him the tune he likes best.

Here a black-letter hero with rat-smelling air
 Tipping winks full of meaning, squats down in his chair,
 The veteran of many a Book-auction is he,
 And he'll not be bamboozled we think, Mr. P.
 If the item is genuine away goes his nod,
 And if cheap is knocked down with "'Tis yours, Mr. Rodd,"
 If a "foist" and his glance of contempt is enough
 Why he dives for his snuff-box and takes only snuff.
 Here the man who is neighbour to famed Mr. Squib,

With its roses the brightest the earth ever gave;
 Its temples and grottoes and fountains as clear
 As the love-lighted eyes that look over its wave?
 Oh, to see it at sunset, when warm o'er the lake
 Its splendour at parting a summer eve throws
 Like a bride full of blushes, who lingering takes
 A last look at the mirror to bed ere she goes.
 Here the music of prayer from a minaret swells,
 Here the Magian his urn full of perfume is swinging,
 And here at the altar a zone of sweet bells
 Round the waist of some fair Indian dancer is ringing, &c. &c.

(He may call us *obscure*, and perhaps tell us we fib)
 The “spirited bidder” (for whom we sha’n’t say)
 Is beginning as usual his work of the day,
 And before the great clock of the Abbey strikes four
 Will have made some two hundred bold biddings or more,
 Till Clarke, justly incensed with the fellow’s assurance,
 Lets him in with a look of affected endurance,
 Saying, “Sir, ’tis your own—give you joy of the lot, it
 Has long been contested and now you have got it.”
 Oh to see how he changes from yellow to blue,
 As he answers, “I’m ready to yield it to you;
 I have *run* up the thing, but if called on to *pay*
 Why I think I must finish by running away.”
 But a smile from his Patron sets all matters right,
 And he boldly bids on in his pocket’s despite.

Here the famous Count *Buff*—with his eyeglass and seals,
 His rings on his fingers and spurs on his heels,
 His straw-coloured wig and magniloquent air,
 And his hat cocked aside like a clown at a fair,
 Strutting up to some daub, with his hand o’er his brow,
 And wiping the canvas, cries “RUBENS I vow,
 His colouring—relief—light and shadow are there—
 His expression—his grouping—his breadth to a hair.
 Then that CUYP there beside it’s as pearly and clear,
 As the first break of day at the spring of the year;
 Though it can’t be compared with that dewy METZU
 So melting and mellow, so tasteful and true:
 They’ve a charm above all that must make them divine;”
 (Speaking under his breath) “*entre nous*, Sir, they’re mine.
 Yes, you’re doubtless surprised that a man of my air,
 Should thus chaffer in pictures, but list while I swear,
 ’Twas my love for the Arts, and I’m master of some,
 That first made me DEALER, and led me to roam.
 As for money, my friend, I would have you to know,
 I care nothing about a few thousands or so;
 There’s my own private income, a mere bagatelle—
 Just five thousand a year, which you know’s pretty well,—
 A trifle admitted, but surely enough
 To buy a few baubles, and pay for one’s snuff;
 Then my wife, besides beauty, of which we’ll be mum,
 Has, fore God I declare it, two-thirds of a PLUM;
 To say naught of an Uncle who lives in the Indies,
 (By the way, can you tell me, my friend, how the wind is?)
 Who has promised, and sure he can do it with ease,
 To send us ere long a few lachs of rupees.
 Then my private collection is worth—so they say—
 Just a cool hundred thousand (not much by the way),
 And my house and its trappings (pray speak if I bore)
 Has been valued by some at a good hundred more.
 As you guess, in my own hackney coach I came down,
 To see how matters go,—and look after my own;
 And thanks to yon pliable knights of the quill
 I shall do pretty well by the sale at Fonthill.”

Here the white-trousered Dandy and black-whiskered Swell,
 The lean sprig of fashion, the beau and the belle—
 The Lord and the Lady—but few of the latter,—
 Have all journeyed post-haste, not to buy but to chatter,—
 To lounge, look about them, and prate at their ease,
 Of Mieris, Correggio, and Paul Veronese.
 But vainly the vender directs his keen glance
 To many a gay group as the biddings advance,
 Inattentive are they to the beam of his eye,
 And he turns to Clarke, Lawford, and Rodd with a sigh,—
 Mid sunshine and storm, mid report good and ill,
 The heroes and props of the sale at Fonthill.

Here Colnaghi, Thorpe, Phillips and Farquhar, good men,
 We could sketch to the life with four strokes of our pen ;
 But we think we had better not touch off a verse on all
 Lest some ill-natured booby should say we've grown personal.
 However to prove that no evil we mean them,
 We'll give them a sweet-tempered couplet between them,
 The two first are good fellows we own with good will,
 The two last are as good—at the sale at Fonthill.

*There are auctions for ever unchangingly dull,
 Like a long winter night ere the moon's at its full,
 Selling on—selling on, but in bidders so slender,
 That ere buyers are caught, half asleep is the vender ;
 Where excepting for brokers, booksellers, and one
 Like the spirited Lawford, no sale could go on.
 Where Report, like a spectre called up from the tomb,
 Whispers "Humbug" and "Trick" and bids buyers be dumb.
 These are not the auctions, 'tis nothing like these
 That has taught Jemmy Christie all parties to please,
 That has given him a power he can wield at his will,
 With the flower of West-enders his saleroom to fill,
 And sans sweeteners or spoonies, to kick up a pother
 To get biddings in plenty of one sort or other.
 'Tis plain honesty lifts him so far o'er his peers
 And has crowned him the Emperor of Town Auctioneers ;—
 With that sprightliness ever in motion, which plays
 On the eye and the pocket, and charms us both ways :
 Now here and now there, wiling cash as it flies
 From the eyes to the purse, from the purse to the eyes.
 If in pictures he deals, such his elegant ease,
 You would swear he was born to sell nothing but these ;
 And his passing mistakes do but serve to awaken
 New mirth, while his credit stands firm and unshaken.

*There are beauties for ever unchangingly bright
 Like the long sunny lapse of a summer's day's light
 Shining on—shining on, by no shadow made tender,
 Till Love falls asleep on its sameness of splendour.
 This was not the beauty, 'twas nothing like this
 That to young Nourmahal gave such magic of bliss.

Vide "Lalla Rookh."

If in Books he dilates—he's as deftly at home,
Be they Novels from Paris or Classics from Rome ;
If on Music—he knows the deep art to unriddle,
When from far-famed Cremona he sells you a fiddle ;
In short such the power of his spells, I've been told,
He can turn what he touches, like Cræsus, to gold ;
And dull before him, you may say what you will,
Is the keen Auctioneer of the Sale at Fonthill.

A. A. W.

Innumerable articles were written about the contents of the Abbey, many praising, others disparaging: almost alone, however, Hazlitt made a tremendous onslaught upon the taste that had brought together the vaunted treasures. "What shall we say," he asked, "to a Collection, which uniformly and deliberately neglects every great work, and every great name in art, to make room for idle rarities and curiosities or mechanical skill? It is hardly necessary to build a Cathedral to set up a toy-shop! Who would paint a miniature cathedral to hang it at the top of the Monument? This huge pile (capable of better things) is cut up into a parcel of little rooms, and those little rooms are stuck full of little pictures, and *bijouterie*. Mr. Beckford may talk of his *Diamond Berchem*, and so on: this is but the language of a *petit-maitre* in art; but the author of 'Vathek' (with his leave) is not a *petit-maitre*. His genius, as a writer, 'hath a devil': his taste in pictures is the quintessence and rectified spirit of *still-life*. He seems not to be susceptible of the poetry of painting, or else to set his face against it. It is obviously a first principle with him to exclude whatever has feeling or imagination—to polish the surface, and suppress the soul of art—to proscribe, by a sweeping clause or at one fell swoop, everything approaching to grace, or beauty, or grandeur—to crush the sense of pleasure or of power in embryo—and to reduce all nature and art, as far as possible, to the texture and level of a china dish—smooth, glittering, cold, and unfeeling. We do not object so much to the predilection for Teniers, Wouvermann, or Ostade—we like to see natural objects naturally painted

—but we unequivocally hate the affectedly mean, the elaborately little, the ostentatiously perverse and distorted, Poelenburg's walls of amber, Mieris's groups of steel, Vanderwerf's ivory flesh; yet these are the chief delights of the late proprietor of Fonthill Abbey! Is it that his mind is 'a volcano burnt out,' and that he likes his senses to repose and be gratified with Persian carpets and enamelled pictures? Or are there not traces of the same infirmity of feeling even in the high-souled Vathek, who compliments the complexion of the two pages of Fakreddin as being equal to 'the porcelain of Franguestan'? Alas! Who would have thought that the Caliph Vathek would have dwindled down into an Emperor of China and King of Japan? But so it is.*

Beckford was undismayed by the thunderbolts launched by Hazlitt, for, indeed, they were written under a misapprehension. "You pay a very ill compliment to my taste to suppose I would furnish my house with such trash—it came from the Phillippine islands," he said, making allusion to "Gil Blas" and Phillips, the auctioneer of the sale of 1823; while to Cyrus Redding he stated: "I sold but little of what I valued. I had not room enough for all the books I possessed in any other place. Do not suppose that more than half of what was sold at Fonthill was mine. I disposed of my superfluous furniture, for which I had no use, and also of some costly things, not of much utility—suitable there only. I would not disgrace my house by Chinese furniture—that was not mine—it was put in by the auctioneer. Horace Walpole would not have suffered it in his toyshop at Strawberry Hill." Hazlitt was, of course, unaware, not only that Phillips, following a practice not even now unknown to auctioneers, had sent goods to Fonthill there to be sold among the rest with the *cachet* of Beckford's name,

* "The Principal Picture Galleries of England" (1824). Hazlitt had made an earlier attack on the contents of Fonthill in the *London Magazine*, November 1822.

but that Beckford had removed from the Abbey his best pictures and books and the really choice articles of *vertu*.

The most absurd rumours were current as to the cost of building Fonthill Abbey and the cost of Beckford's establishment. Hazlitt said it took £20,000 a year to defray the expenses of Beckford's table and of his household; but this statement must be accepted with caution, for the same writer declared that the Abbey cost nearly a million, whereas we have it on the authority of the owner that the entire outlay was £273,000, "some hundreds over that sum it may be, no more," and that this expenditure was scattered over sixteen to eighteen years. It was not, however, because of the vast sums expended that Beckford gave up Fonthill, for his income of £110,000—Britton says that Beckford told him it was £120,000*—and the accumulations of his minority were more than equal to the outlay: the reason was that his income was steadily diminishing. So early as December 1811 he had written to James Wyatt that he was "induced from many considerations to postpone all extensive plans of improvement," and it is fair to assume that one of these considerations was the depreciation of his property in the West Indies, from which he derived the greater part of his revenue. Then came a disastrous lawsuit. "The Chancellor took away from me by a decree, in the course of what lawyers call justice, two large estates that had been sixty or more years in my family," he told Cyrus Redding. "You may imagine their importance when I tell you there were 1500 slaves upon them. This decree, too, the Chancellor accompanied with the reflection that 'Mr. Beckford had plenty of property left.' That was my reason for quitting Fonthill. I was sorry to throw so many poor people out of employ, and to stay further improvements, but I had no choice—living there would have been too expensive."

* J. Mitford: "Unpublished Note-books" (British Museum, Add. MSS. 325-66 f. 38.

The estates lost to him by Lord Eldon's decree, based upon a flaw discovered in the title, were said to have produced £30,000 a year ; but this was not the only inroad made upon Beckford's fortune, for the value of all property in Jamaica was rapidly falling. It must have been a great blow to Beckford to leave in his sixty-third year the home upon which he had lavished so much care and in which he had taken so great an interest ; but he wore a bold front : "I can bend to fortune," he said bravely. "I have philosophy enough not to cry like a child about a plaything."

Beckford devoted some of the proceeds of the sale of Fonthill to the purchase of annuities, and, as at his age £1000 a year was obtainable for the capital sum of £10,000, and he lived for twenty-two years, the investment proved exceedingly profitable. A considerable sum derived from the same source was put aside for the purchase of a new home, which he hoped to find in the neighbourhood of Bath. He cast a longing eye on Prior Park, built by Ralph Allen, and made ineffectual overtures for its purchase. "They wanted too much for it," he said ; "I should have liked it very much, it possesses such great capability of being made a very beautiful spot. There was likewise another house near there, which I was in treaty for ; but I really believe the proprietor took me for a gold mine, by the way in which he wanted to work my pockets ; but you perceive I still continue to wear this excellent little button to secure the pocket—which fashion the excellent Archbishop of Portugal advised me never to leave off." Failing Prior Park, Beckford purchased two houses at the west corner of the aristocratic Lansdown Crescent, and soon after bought the neighbouring house. "Now, had I not bought this house," he told Cyrus Redding, "I should have been perpetually annoyed by the ticking of some cursed jack, the jingling of some beastly piano, horrid-toned bells tinkling, and so on. The only way to avoid this was by buying the house, and so I

bought it, to the infinite annoyance and astonishment of the Bath aristocracy, an odd breed, I believe." He connected the houses by a flying gallery, into which the daylight penetrated through stained-glass windows. He also acquired a considerable amount of land on the adjacent Lansdown Hill.

I am perfectly disposed, my Dear Sir, to meet Mr. Blathwayte's ideas respecting rent in the manner that gentleman [finds] most satisfactory. All I ask is immediate possession, that the season for planting may not be lost, as it is my intention to convert every acre of this field into wood (he wrote to an agent on January 11, 1825).

If Messrs. Lin have any instructions to secure me as a Tenant, they had better conclude . . . *before the Bird quits the Bough*; which may be the case sooner than they appear to apprehend, for my patience is (I can most seriously assure you) pretty nearly exhausted.

The conduct of Mr. Salmon, on behalf of, *or rather against*, his poor helpless clients is as disgusting and improper as incomprehensible.

If they are waiting to hook in the lands occupied by Osborne, they may wait long enough; that purchase being to me a matter of the greatest indifference.

In a similarly high-handed fashion he subsequently dealt with the Bath authorities, who troubled him about rights-of-way over his new property.

I beg you will inform Mr. Taylor (he instructed his representative on January 27, 1829) that if I continue to be annoyed with complaints about paths, I shall have recourse to a sweeping remedy. I shall quit Bath and immediately upon my departure all my fences upon Lansdown shall be removed, the whole thrown open, and a town of not less than 1500 hovels erected upon the freehold behind my present habitation. It shall be said of me—"Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles."

The houses in Lansdown Crescent were, of course, magnificently furnished, and here, as previously at Fonthill,

Beckford interested himself in all the details, nothing being too trifling for him to overlook.

The little book-gallery may be moreened as proposed, but I shall defer performing that operation upon the dining parlour till another season, so that the moths may enjoy themselves till next April and come forth in hundreds and tens of thousands if they please (he wrote to a Bath firm of decorators in December [1823 ?]). To tell the truth I am rather afraid of the lumpish effect of so much scarlet *en masse*—and do not wish to change the hangings till I have fixed upon a colour more to my mind.

The contents of these houses made them a veritable museum of all the arts, but in spite of the treasures there gathered together, this residence was generally regarded as less interesting than Beckford's estate on Lansdown, where the gardens had been laid out under the immediate supervision of the proprietor, who was particularly desirous that innumerable trees should be planted on the barren slope. "I have crowned Lansdown with a forest," he was at last able to declare with great and justifiable pride. On the summit of the hill, he caused to be erected by Goodridge, the architect, a Tower, one hundred and thirty feet high, crowned with a cast-iron model of the Temple of Lysicrates at Athens. Subsequently he regretted that the structure was not at least forty feet higher. "However," he remarked, "such as it is, it is a famous landmark for the drunken farmers on their return from market"; but as the hill was eight hundred feet above the sea-level, from the top of the Tower Beckford through a powerful glass could see the ships entering the Bristol Channel.

The Tower had several rooms, all hung with fine paintings, including works by Franks, Breughel, Cuyp, and Titian; and there was one long, narrow apartment fitted up as an Oratory. The walls of the Oratory were covered with pictures portraying devotional subjects, and



LANSDOWN TOWER, BATH

WILLIS MADDOX

FROM A DRAWING ON STONE BY C. J. RICHARDSON, F.S.A.

at the end facing the entrance stood marble figures of the Virgin and Child, bathed in soft light, concentrated upon the group from the windows in the roof. "That is the true light of devotion," Beckford exclaimed enthusiastically to a visitor. "It is an excitement in itself to solemn thoughts and prayer—the dim religious light of the sanctuary. It was that light which they intended to pervade the old cathedrals. The Bath Abbey church is of the Late Gothic—too light for such an effect."

In Wiltshire Beckford had rarely gone beyond the limits of his estate, except when driving to London; but at Bath he might occasionally be seen at a concert or a flower show, and not infrequently riding on his cream-coloured Arabian, either alone, attended by three grooms, two behind and one in front as an outrider, or in company with the Duke of Hamilton or a friend. He was always dressed in a great-coat with cloth buttons, a buff-striped waistcoat, breeches of the same kind of cloth as the coat, and brown top-boots, the fine cotton stockings appearing over them, in the fashion of thirty or forty years before. He wore his hair powdered, and with his handsome face and fine eyes looked every inch the fine old English gentleman.

These appearances in public were the only difference between the life Beckford led at Fonthill and at Lansdown. In fine weather it was his invariable custom to rise early, ride to the Tower, look at the flowers, and walk back to his house for breakfast. He would then read until noon, transact business with his steward, and later ride out for exercise, again visiting the Tower, if there was any planting or building going on. After dinner, which in those days was served in the afternoon, unless he had a visitor, he would retire to his library, and occupy himself with his correspondence, his books, and his prints, and the examination of catalogues of sales sent to him by the London dealers. This routine was rarely varied, except when he went to London, where by this time he had removed from No. 22

Grosvenor Square, to a house, No. 127 Park Street, overlooking Hyde Park, which, owing to its somewhat insanitary condition, he styled "Cesspool House." In 1841, because of its many defects, he gave up this residence.

The Bath aristocracy and the fashionable folk who flocked to the watering-place could not understand how books and pictures, music and gardens, could occupy any one to the exclusion of participation in the gaieties of the town; and the rumours that had been current in Wiltshire society were revived in the little Somersetshire valley. The most awful crimes were placed to his account, and with them accusations of devil-worship and the study of astrology. Nothing was too terrible or too absurd with which to charge the man of mystery, and, we are told, "surmises were current about a brood of dwarfs that vegetated in an apartment built over the archway connecting his two houses; and the vulgar, rich and poor alike, gave a sort of half-credit to cabalistical monstrosities invoked in that apartment." Against the latter suspicion it is unnecessary to defend him; the "brood of dwarfs," however, on examination, dwindled to one, Piero by name, whom Beckford had found in an Italian city, homeless, friendless, deserted by his parents, had brought to England and taken charge of for life. "What do you think of him, eh? Oh, he's a strange thing, isn't he?" his master said to a visitor at Lansdown, adding in an unearthly voice, in allusion to the rumours in the town below, "He is a Giaour, and feeds upon toadstools!"

Though Beckford at Bath rarely indulged in the pleasures of authorship, he was once again to create a sensation in literary circles, this time with a work written nearly half a century before it was published. It has already been recounted how in his youth he had composed the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters," "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents," and "Vathek," and, later, the two burlesque novels, "The

Elegant Enthusiast" and "Azemia." He had, further, in 1783 translated from the Arabic a short story, "Al Raoui," which, however, was not printed until 1799, when it appeared, bound up with a German version of the tale, presumed also by him, and some of his verses, contributed originally to the magazines. These books are all that Beckford is known to have written, but the following letter suggests that he had also written anonymously, and further had by him unpublished manuscripts.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

FONTHILL, 1832.

If ever the world discovers the key of certain anonymous publications it will find I have not been idle. All things considered it had better not goad me to *publish*; many would wince if I did. As to the Episodes of "Vathek," or the Memoirs of Portugal, Murray, or Colburn, or Longman, or anybody might have had them; at a moment, too, when any sense or nonsense connected with Fonthill Abbey would have run through edition after edition like wildfire. But not seeing their way so clearly as might have been imagined, they neglected the opening, and shrank back from one of the best speculations of the kind that ever presented itself.

To the anonymous writings there is not the faintest clue; but of the unpublished works something is known. If a writer in the *European Magazine* for September 1797 may be believed, Beckford wrote a series of "Letters on the actual State and leading Characters of several of the Courts of Europe, and particularly that of France, from the beginning of the Revolution to the Death of the King," but there is to-day no trace of the manuscript. There are, however, in existence, besides the "Liber Veritatis," the "Episodes" to "Vathek," and some other stories written in French, making up with the "Episodes" a "Suite des Contes arabes," viz., "Yao," "Histoire de Danianoc, Jeune Homme du pays de Gou-gou," and

"Histoire d'Etonard Felkanaman et d'Ansel Hougrond." In manuscript also in the early thirties were the letters written in 1787 about Spain and Portugal, and, composed seven years later, the "Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha."

Beckford, who did not underrate his literary gifts, saw with pleasure that "Vathek" was taking the place to which it was entitled. In 1809 a new edition in English had been called for, and this was followed six years later by a reprint in London of the original French edition, because, so ran the opening lines of the preface,

Les éditions de Paris et de Lausanne, étant devenue extrêmement rares, j'ai consenti enfin à ce qui l'on republiât à Londres ce petit ouvrage tel que je l'ai composé.

Again in 1823 a new edition of Henley's translation was required; and, the interest evinced in Beckford increasing steadily, it was thought worth while in the following year to reprint, for the first time since its appearance in 1780, the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters." So appreciable, indeed, was the demand for "Vathek" that Bentley desired to print it in his series of "Standard Novels," and this request, which eventually reached Beckford through the medium of Clarke, the bookseller, led the author to think the time had come to publish the "Episodes," and also "Alcobaça and Batalha" and "Italy, Spain and Portugal," as he called the work that was to include the Spanish-Portuguese letters of 1787 and a revised version of "Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents."

So early as 1818 Beckford had begun to consider the question of publishing the "Letters." In that year he told Rogers that he wished Moore would come to Font-hill, and prepare them for the press. "Rogers supposes he would give me something magnificent for it—a thousand pounds, perhaps," Moore noticed in his Journal

on October 18; "but if he were to give me a hundred times that sum I would not have my name coupled with his. To be Beckford's *sub.*, not very desirable." There can be no doubt, however, that Moore, as well as Rogers, saw the manuscript, and that both authors "borrowed" ideas from it.* Beckford was aware of the pilfering, and hints at his knowledge in the opening sentence of the Preface to his book:

Some justly admired Authors having condescended to glean a few stray thoughts from these letters, which have remained dormant a great many years; I have been at length emboldened to lay them before the public.

As the following correspondence shows, the negotiations for publication were conducted on Beckford's behalf by Clarke, to whom the author wrote, concerning the "Letters," "I will not disgrace myself by accepting anything like a common price for so uncommonly strange a production."

G. CLARKE to WILLIAM BECKFORD

11 MOUNT STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,
Sunday, 3rd Oct., 1833.

SIR,

My interview with Bentley lasted from 3 o'clock yesterday until 9 o'clock. You will, of course, say, Sir, "Well, in all this time you must have done something." Neither D'Israeli nor Jerdan were present; and Bentley, perhaps with some truth, observed he preferred reading the MS. himself to listen to D., who might give such effect to it as might lead him to give more than he otherwise would. My coolness in the business, and absence of anything like thrusting it upon him seemed a puzzle. He says Mr. Beckford's mind ought to be disabused on the subject of £1000 as he will not give anything like it. Flattered, as *he expresses himself* he is, with your giving

* See Lockhart's article on "Italy, Spain and Portugal" (*Quarterly Review*, vol. li.); also *Notes and Queries*, series ii. vol. iv. p. 14; &c.

the preference to him, and appreciating that talent (which everybody acknowledges) as he certainly does, he is not inclined to offer or I to receive a bargaining affair. He says he shall certainly *to-morrow*, offer a handsome price as the times go, in the hopes that it may lead to his purchasing Barkiarokh,* which he has set his heart on. Some time since, it appears, he addressed a letter to you on the subject of introducing Vathek into the Standard Novels to which, *of course*, he received no answer. *He swears*, should the MS. be accorded him, to bring out the work in a manner not to be exceeded; and, knowing as he does that it will be his crack work of this and former seasons, to spare no expense in the getting up of it and producing it to the world. Whatever impression you have of this interview (and to-morrow will throw more light on the subject) I think we shall not do better with any publisher.

I remain, Sir,

Your truly obliged and humble servant,

G. CLARKE.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

Monday, 4th Nov., 1833.

The less Bentley is inclined to pay for Portugal, the more I shall exact for Barkiarokh, should he continue desirous of obtaining it. Let him take care, or I shall completely have done with him. The apprehension of being seduced by anybody's reading him into giving a larger price than he thinks might be probable is shabby and little-tradesman-like in the extreme—most egregiously so when we reflect for what and with whom he deals. As to the proposal anent the introduction of Vathek into the Standard Novels it was never submitted to me. I suppose my [agent] did not judge it worth while. Had it been made to you—the properest person in every respect, especially in this department—it would have reached me and been answered.

* One of the unpublished "Episodes" of "Vathek."

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN, November, 1833.

Octavos I never dreamt of; 12mos not taller than the volumes of the Family Library are the height of my ambition. How to fill two of them I cannot tell without eking out with matter scraped together from almost obliterated notes and scratches. To what you have already in MS. not more than as much again can be added. The quantity is trifling—but then—the *quality*—but then, authors are not impartial judges of the quality of their own performances, and most probably I form no exception to this almost general rule, though I sometimes flatter myself I am the very mirror of impartiality. . . . Rest assured that upon the subject of the publication, I am as cool as the very freshest cucumber that ever issued from Kew or any other garden. Bentley may be persuaded of that truth.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN,

Unless Bentley can persuade himself, and feels inspired, to give a sum as round as the great globe itself, nay, rounder—for the globe we know is flatter at the poles than my Episodes, I hope, will be found to be in any part of them—we are not likely to deal. As you are more and more convinced, nay, write me positive word in yesterday's letter, that he will never think of thousands, he had better give up the point and cease fidgeting himself upon the subject. As to me, I am fidget proof. He may be on or off, twenty times running, just as his fancy dictates. With him I can never be offended, such is my partiality.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN, 1833.

"Portio mea, Domine, sit in terra Viventium." As we all run the chance of a removal from this wicked world when least we expect it, come to the point with as little delay as possible, even upon terms somewhat less

magnificent than we talked of. At any rate, bring me a specific answer, the sooner after half-past seven this eve the better, that we may have more time to discuss it. *Now* is the propitious moment—*now* shines the favouring star.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN, 1833.

The MS. once sold I shall dismiss all *care* about it. Incense or rotten eggs become all alike to me the moment we part with the work. And though I may refrain myself from writing the poor little volume down, still I must confess I feel a strange sort of half-insane depraved inclination to do so. . . . Adieu.

Clarke was successful in arranging for the publication of "Vathek" in Bentley's "Standard Novels"; and in 1834 it appeared as No. LXI. of that series, the volume containing also Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto" and "Monk" Lewis's "The Bravo of Venice." Bentley became Beckford's publisher-in-chief. He at once took over the "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters"; and in 1834 issued "Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal"—a work that appeared in the same year also in Baudry's European Library, published at Paris. In 1835 Bentley brought out "Alcobaça and Batalha," and five years later republished this and the earlier book of travels in one volume—the last edition of any of Beckford's books issued in the author's lifetime.

Beckford's interest in the various publications was very considerable, and his annoyance with adverse critics is only to be compared with the anger he displayed when rival collectors at auction sales snatched treasures from his grasp.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

I am most happy to hear of the Countess [of Blessington?]'s enthusiasm; and if she would but make a *certain*

choice I could point out to her, my most favourable opinion of her wisdom and judgment would be still enhanced. The comparison with Robinson Crusoe delights me, you may easily suppose, beyond expression, beyond idea. What! is Defoe to be thrown down too, as well as Walpole, Gray, Byron, etc.? O glorious me! O fortunate Beloved!

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN,

Mr. Bentley should not fail to introduce his second edition, if, indeed, it be coming forth, with a fresh lively astounding flourish of trumpets, such as may shame down and silence your penny-squeakists or sow-gelder's horn. I am sorry nothing beyond a little shabby insignificant extract from the Haarlem scene had made its appearance in the *Times*, a paper of primary consequence.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN, 1834.

Bentley should not relax his efforts, and be doubly vigilant, if he wishes to keep his top spinning. The malice prepense of the E[dinburgh] Reviewers is perfectly evident, and can only be overwhelmed by a torrent of eulogy continually pouring forth. There is yet time to make this tide sweep all before it. . . . Now is your time for increasing the Vathek mania by all that analysis, commentary, etc., can do for it; now the propitious hour for sharpening the public appetite for more powerful Episodes, which, if ever they emerge from Hades into daylight, will reduce Byron's Corsairs and Victor Hugo's monsters and scoundrels to insignificance. I speak from fulness of heart and conviction, not from any hungry or thirsty desire to treat. . . . The Duchess has just enclosed me another fervid letter about THE BOOK!* It is from Lady Dunmore, whose dear lord (no indifferent judge) says—what I really have not conceit enough to repeat. The Duke of Sussex's ecstasies also pass all bounds. In short, the fever continues

* Talleyrand pronounced "The Book" the proper title for "Italy, Spain and Portugal."

to rage in every quarter, royal, noble and plebeian. . . . Mozart never wrote a more imposing overture to any of his operas than the flourish introductory to the copious extracts from Vathek in the *Morning Chronicle* of last Monday. No wonder it should have redoubled a demand for the sacred volume itself, unencumbered with trash. The frontispiece (you may comfort the artist by observing) produces a terrible and appalling effect. The prefatory notes, quotations from the Q[uarternly] and Byron are *contemptible*, and *that* I desire you may tell Mr. Bentley. Pray, who wrote the grand trumpetage above alluded to? Was it Bulwer? Has he written? Or is he to write?

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

T. Hook keeps cold and carefully aloof. So does the vilest of reps—you know who I mean—and so does the *Examiner*, though the quondam editor, Leigh Hunt, if he has read the book, must have received some delight from it. He has too just an eye for nature not to have been pleased at least with some of the landscape touches.

The adverse critics of "Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal," were few and far between. It was, indeed, received with a chorus of praise, and no one cried "Bravo!" louder than Lockhart, who reviewed the work in the *Quarterly Review* for June 1834. "We risk nothing," he wrote enthusiastically, "in predicting that Mr. Beckford's Travels will henceforth be classed amongst the most elegant productions of modern literature; they will be forthwith translated into every language of the Continent—and will keep his name alive, centuries after all the brass and marble he ever piled together have ceased to vibrate with the echoes of *Modenhas*." What Lockhart said in the early thirties has, during the eighty years intervening, been echoed by every critic of repute, and this

book shares with "Vathek" the distinction of having elicited from Francis Thompson the happy phrase,

"That Atlas among enchanter, Beckford." *

The two English writers of his day with whom, on the whole, Beckford had most in common, were Lord Byron and Benjamin Disraeli. Both these men had expressed a very keen appreciation of the works of their brother-author; but while Beckford declined an opportunity to make Byron's acquaintance,† he was anxious to see Disraeli. Though horrified to hear that the latter smoked, and thinking little of his chances as a politician, he was—and, to Disraeli's delight, he made no secret of it—much attracted by the young man's writings.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI to HIS SISTER

May 26, 1832.

I received your letter yesterday,—and the note you enclosed was from Beckford, to whom I had sent a copy of "Contarini." His answer is short, but very courteous. It commences with four exclamations. "How wildly original! How full of intense thought! How awakening! How delightful!" This really consoles one for Mr. Patmore's criticism in the *Court Journal*.‡

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

[LANSDOWN, 1833.]

You were probably in a great hurry when you despatched the *Waverley*, etc., just received, or you would scarcely have omitted some observations on my letter to Disraeli. There are innumerable passages in *Alroy* of the most exquisite beauty, which fully justified my predilection for the most original author. The highly polished style he has adopted resembles a good deal that of the

* "Shelley" (ed. 1909), p. 74.

† See p. 146 of this work.

‡ "Lord Beaconsfield's Letters, 1830-1852," ed. 1887, p. 76.

Idyll I read to you in Park Street. I doubt, however, that it will take, or that such refinement as Disraeli displays, both in sentiment or diction, can be appreciated by the gross rattling readers of the present cold-hearted period. I much doubt that the work will become more popular than his C[ontarini] F[leming] or obtain a wider currency. . . . I wonder whether D[israeli] is partial, or the contrary, to French. Unless very conversant with that language the Episodes to V[athek] would be thrown away *even upon him*. Had I remained in Town I would have seen him, but I would not advise an excursion to Bath for that purpose. I should remain inaccessible. We are probably destined to meet, but when and where is doubtful.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

Much do I regret that an opportunity of seeing Disraeli has not yet offered. I trust it will ere long, when I shall most probably afford him a glance of my Portuguese Memoirs, and the fragment of another Arabian composition entitled the Three Mountains.

G. CLARKE to WILLIAM BECKFORD

11 MOUNT STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,
9 March, 1833.

SIR,

On my entering D'Israeli's sitting-room I found him with his Father and brother smoking—the trio scarcely visible. He seemed much pleased with your note, and expressed himself highly complimented in it—his remarks to his father on the elegance of its composition were certainly of the true order; he has a very happy manner of expressing his ideas which seemed formed on an excellent foundation.

Fraser perhaps may say something next month, but what I can hardly guess.

The paragraph which appears in the *Athenæum* of to-day was at my request. Should you like the insertion in that paper of anything more potent, it shall be done on receiving a hint or two. . . .

From what I see of D'Israeli I should say he is not sufficiently "French" to comprehend Vathek; however, I may be wrong—he is an "Oriental Voluptuary" and concocts his scenes with great effect.

I am, Sir,

With respect,

Your much obliged Servant,

G. CLARKE.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

[LANSDOWN, March 1833.]

I am *sorry* to hear that Disraeli and Co. are smoking away like vulgar Factories, *sorrier* than you are, no doubt, who so often take a whiff. Your conjectures as to Contarini Fleming's French are probably enough well founded. I am also very sorry for that, as in that case he will only be able to guess at the Episodes. Whatever his French may be, his English is the loveliest and most superior I ever met with. I shall probably tell him so in a day or two, when I may send you some short and rapid reflections upon his works, which will delight him far more than the note you delivered, and which had little merit except its warmth and sincerity. These reflections (if I should send them) are only to be *shown* him quite *en passant*. . . . I have slowly and reluctantly finished the truly Wondrous Tale of Alroy, which I wish had been extended to twenty volumes. I did not hurry on, fearful of expending the treasure too fast; for a treasure I consider it to be, and of the richest kind. No Man of Genius could lay his hand upon his heart and declare that this glowing composition contains not the highest poetry, without acting the part of a traitor to the "interior God"; and from some mean interested cause attempting to deceive others. . . . The latter part of Alroy affected me deeply. What can be truer to Nature or more admirable than the delineation and development of the character of Hossain? His speaking of the agony of impalement and the deadly effect of that horrid spectacle upon the bystanders, sufficient to turn their blood, with all the cant of a medical professor, is a master-stroke. The scenes in the dungeon are heart-rending. The hyena-like fierceness and treachery

of Schirene most ably drawn—the death of Miriam beautiful—the heroism of the youthful and still lovely Alroy sublime. If you happen not to have yet read the book (and attentively too), you will not comprehend a word I have written. What appears to be hauteur and extreme conceit in Disraeli is *consciousness*, uncontrollable consciousness of superior powers, and most proud I am to perceive that he is so strongly imbued with Vathek—the image it presents haunts him continually—the halls of Eblis, the thrones of the Sulimans are for ever present to his mind's eye, tinted with somewhat different hues from those of the original, but partaking of the same awful and dire solemnity.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

You have printed better things than Ixion in Heaven. The philosophical tale perhaps may make it go down. But you know what you are about, and are quite right in cultivating so superior and extraordinary a genius as Disraeli—Mr. Disraeli, and not D'Israeli, he writes himself, though for my part I think D'Israeli in better taste.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN

I should think Alroy has no chance in Marylebone, notwithstanding the terseness and energy of his address to the electors. What can possess so bright a genius to dabble again and again in such a muddy horsepond? . . . The grandeur of thought and power of expression that most extraordinary writer possesses are truly remarkable. As he dates from Berkshire perhaps he is not yet returned to confound his own smoke with that of the Metropolis.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI to WILLIAM BECKFORD

July 3rd, 1834.

I am very sorry. I hope you will not fall into the hands of a Pict.

Yours ever faithfully,

B. DISRAELI.

If you have time, read *The Infernal Marriage* in the *New Monthly*.

[ENCLOSURE]

MACVEY NAPIER to BENJAMIN DISRAELI

EDINBURGH, *June 28th, 1834.*

DEAR SIR,

I am very much obliged by your offer to review Beckford's *Travels*, but having, a week or two ago, made an arrangement in regard to that work for the October Number, I am thereby prevented from availing myself of your kind intentions on this occasion.

I have the honour to be, Dear Sir,

Your faithful and ob^t Serv^t,

MACVEY NAPIER.

WILLIAM BECKFORD to G. CLARKE

LANSDOWN.

Pray tell Disraeli that I have read, enjoyed, and admired his *Infernal Marriage*. The sly, dry humour of that most original composition is to me delightful. The *Parcæ* are capital, and the idea of the *Furies*, though they look rather horrible or so, *meaning well*, is one of those traits of sheer wit peculiarly English. *Proserpine* is a fine lady of the first order, not unlike the amorous race of *Courland*, a genuine *Biret*—in short, a *Duchesse de Dino* when in her bloom. The grizzly monarch is a gentleman and a king every inch; his abode, his little comforts, his faithful dog (and *what* a dog! how grandly and terribly shadowed forth!) are freelined by the well-known hand of a true poet. Though D[israeli] is perpetually galloping over *Vathek's* manor of hell, it is no trespass. The *Caliph* and *Alroy* were born co-lords of that appalling region; its gloom, its vastness, its undefined horrors are their own, and the dreadful game they may start from its coverts belongs to them by prescription, as much as it did in his day to *Dante*. Who dares deny it was decreed from the beginning of time that *Eblis* should be portrayed reigning supreme on his globe of fire, and the burning hearts of his misguided followers displayed as beacon-lights to ward off the perpetrators of crime and the wallowers in sensuality? There is a nice moral for you!

G. CLARKE *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

11 MOUNT STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,
July 12th, 1834.

SIR,

That the Parisians to a man are alive to Vathek admits of no doubt, that they will be equally alive to the Book [*i.e.*, "Italy, etc."] is almost a certainty. Vathek is selling here amazingly, many I find prefer the original Edition to the Lewisian Walpoleian lasts; and some who have never read Vathek now are led to do so by their having become acquainted with the Book—in short you have caused Byron to fall very low in the Barometer. What the Piets will do, God knows; Monday will shew us, but this I know, that they had better beware not to attempt to stifle the universal cry. Many thanks, Sir, for your invaluable letter; it is indeed, Sir, intrinsically important as not only containing a charming critique on the Infernal Marriage, but as giving a most happy, fervid and masterly sketch of its Author, who I am sorry is not now in London. Her Grace [of Hamilton]'s note which you have condescended to send me is merely an additional proof of how the fever rages in Scotland,—Oh, that they could have Barkiarokh.

Merlin held out to the last moment that he would give me the MS., but was unable to lay his hands upon it—I sent him a Letter from Calais expressive of my surprise and desiring him to forward it in a Cargo which will shortly arrive at Payne's.

The Paris people seem anything but settled, the Citizen King not the most popular one.

I remain, Sir, very respectfully,

Your much obliged and humble Servant,

G. CLARKE.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI *to* WILLIAM BECKFORD

31A PARK STREET.

DEAR AND HONOURED SIR,

I send you some tribute in the shape of a piece of marble which I myself brought from the Parthenon. It may be sculptured into a classical press for the episodes of

Vathek, which otherwise may fly away without the world reading them.

I think it very unfair that I . . . [*manuscript torn*] . . . I am not permitted personally to express to him how much he has obliged

B. DISRAELI.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI to HIS SISTER

June 16, 1834.

I made Beckford's acquaintance at the opera on Thursday. He told me that he would send a copy of his *Travels* to my father as well as to myself, but neither has yet arrived. He says "*Mejnour and Leila*" [by Isaac Disraeli] is capital, and he amused me very much. . . .

Thus I have had three interviews of late with three remarkable men who fill the public ear at present: O'Connell, Beckford, and Lord Durham. The first is the man of the greatest genius; the second of the greatest taste; and the last of the greatest ambition.*

BENJAMIN DISRAELI to WILLIAM BECKFORD

CARLTON CLUB, May 17 [1837].

MY DEAR SIR,

To prevent any mistake I write to say I have ordered a copy of *Venetia* to be sent to you under cover to Mr. Bentley of New Burlington Street. I have reason to believe that some confusion may have occurred about my last book, which between Mr. Clarke, who could not be found, and Mr. Bentley, to whom it was afterwards forwarded, may not have reached you. I should be sorry for this, tho' the book was not worth reading. The present is more in our way, tho' adulterated enough with commonplace, I hope, to be popular.

I am always,

Yours faithfully,

D.

* "*Lord Beaconsfield's Letters, 1830-1852*," ed. 1887, pp. 86-87.

To B. DISRAELI

Friday, 19th May, 1837.

I not only received, but admired Henrietta Temple—and expressed my thanks in a few lines which, it appears, never reached their destination. Most spells of a delightful kind are dissolved or dissolving—those of a contrary nature are still in force—have hitherto prevented Venetia from reaching me. This morning I sent to Bentley, to enquire after her, and received for answer that she had not appeared—at least, for me. This was chilling, for I long to see her, and am, with the warmth of sincere regard,

Most faithfully yrs.,

WILLIAM BECKFORD.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST YEARS OF WILLIAM BECKFORD (1838-1844)

Beckford's health : His good spirits : His occupations : He preserves all his faculties in old age : His activity : His fortune : Correspondence concerning the sale of pictures : His last illness : His death : His grave

THOUGH Beckford lived to the patriarchal age of eighty-four, almost to the last hour of his life he enjoyed good health. It has already been said that when nearly eighty he declared he had never known a moment's *ennui*: few men could say so much; yet there is no doubt this boast was true, for he had stumbled upon the secret that only the idle man is bored. Beckford was never idle: he had made so many interests for himself that every moment of his day was occupied. A man of his age who, in his last weeks, retains all his enthusiasm for his books, his prints, and his gardens, may well claim that he has made a success of life. His intellectual power never waned; his sight was preserved to him unimpaired—at seventy-eight he could read from manuscript for an hour and a half without resting; and when his last illness overtook him, he was busily engaged in marking a catalogue of M. Nodier's library, the sale of which at Paris his agent was to attend to make purchases. He was as enthusiastic about his collections at the age of eighty-four as he had been when he took up his residence at Fonthill fifty years before.

Physically, too, considering his great age, Beckford was wonderfully active, and until within a few days of his

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death he took regular exercise on foot and horseback. When he was seventy-seven he astonished a friend by mentioning that he had on the previous day at dusk ridden from Cheapside to his house in Park Lane; and a year later he stated, "I never feel fatigue. I can walk from twenty to thirty miles a day; and I only use my carriage [in London] on account of its being convenient to put a picture or book into it, which I happen to purchase in my rambles." At seventy-five his activity was so great that he could mount rapidly to the top of the tower at Lansdown without halting,—“no small exertion,” comments Cyrus Redding feelingly, “for many who were fifteen or twenty years younger”; and even eight years later, during his visits to London, he would ride to Hampstead Heath, or through Hyde Park, and along the Edgware Road to West End, pulling up his horse opposite the spot where once had been the entrance to his mother's house.

Most men who live to an advanced age have some theory to account for it. Beckford had none, beyond believing that his days had probably been prolonged by the fact that his life had been temperate, and that, as he grew older, he took reasonable care of himself. “I enjoy too good health, feel too happy, and am too much pleased with life, to have any inclination to throw it away for want of attention,” he said. “When I am summoned I must go, though I should not much mind living another hundred years, and, as far as my health goes at present, I see no reason why I should not.” Thus, when going out he would put on an overcoat, even if there were only the slightest wind stirring; and, however interested or amused he might be, he would always retire early; but while he took such precautions as these, he was in no sense a valetudinarian. His love of fresh air, and his activity, together with the regular life he led, undoubtedly had much to do with his attaining his great age.

Though Beckford died a rich man, his fortune had



WILLIAM BECKFORD
JOHN DOYLE

greatly diminished from the £110,000 a year and the £1,000,000 in ready money with which he started life. The lawsuit and the depreciation of property in Jamaica, already alluded to, had compelled him to give up Fonthill ; but even after he had removed to Bath the value of his colonial plantations steadily decreased, and were at last sold for £45,000—even at this price not being easily disposed of. “ I wish I could as readily devise the means of selling the Jamaica estates,” White, the solicitor, of the firm of Fownes and White, Lincoln’s Inn, wrote to his client, “ as you can distinctly give directions for it.” Towards the end of 1830 Messrs. Plummer and Wilson, colonial agents, suspended payment, and Beckford was further inconvenienced ; but, though he occasionally sold a picture, there is no ground for the belief that he was ever in want of money, for he left £80,000 in securities and a collection of books that realised over £45,000, besides pictures by Romney, Reynolds, and other masters that still hang in Hamilton Palace. He sold pictures merely to obtain money to purchase prints and books and to complete the building of the tower. His letters, in connection with such transactions, are certainly not those of a man who must sell at any price.

[LANSDOWN] 6 March [1841].

Unless Mr. H[olford] learns how to act with more discernment and *less* timidity he will never form the transcendent collection I thought he aimed at.

In the present instance, 1500 gs. was not too much to have given for a Wouvermann of such rare and unquestionable excellence, nor were the two leading specimens of their respective masters, the V.H^{no} and the Gaspard, at 1000 gs. apiece, rated above their value. One day or other, Mr. H. will be sensible of the mistake he has committed. On my side I am perfectly satisfied to retain the pictures, and do not regret *in the least* that the offer was neglected.

BATH, 6 May, 1841.

Mr. Holford or Holdforth, as he ought to be called, sometimes makes a good hit ; but he writes pedantically, if I may judge from the extract just recd., and is not competent, I fear, duly to appreciate this pure and affecting picture. I cannot understand Ld. Crewe—the Wright business is not desperate—Why does he not come forwards again ? I wd. treat *with him* upon easier terms than with any other person in the universe.

I doubt your doing anything to good purpose with such a cold-blooded pragmatistical prig as the conceited unconscious dupe of many and many a notorious member of the swell mob of London dealers—placing such a picture in such hands will be almost as bad as sacrificing it to Sir Benjamin's job-masters.

My patience is [so] nearly worn to the very last dregs that unless despatch is used by some one or other—I shall renounce this pretty picture and make up my mind to finish the tower in that plain, effective inexpensive way we may shortly contrive to do by laying our heads together.

I am from my heart most cordially yrs.,

W. B.

[BATH] 7th May, 1841.

Lord Crewe, I hear from several quarters, is fitting up his ancient hall in a very pure style. How desirable, therefore, the Perugino ought to be to him. I heartily wish *before it be too late* that he would renew an offer and save me the disgrace of selling to the Lobbingal gallery or to *such* a connoisseur as Mr. Holdforth, who, to judge from the extract of his letter at this moment staring me in the face, has no true feeling, no just appreciation of the unquestionable merits of this most venerable picture.

My patience being exhausted (as I stated in my letter of yesterday), if you cannot close with Mr. Holdforth, and Ld. Crewe remains a nonentity, I shall treasure up the picture and finish the tower in the cheapest manner we can devise.

[BATH] Saturday, 8th May, 1841.

I am grieved to find you are suffering so cruelly.—Rheumatism of all kinds and in all their most painful varieties are the natural consequences of the sudden ups

and downs of the barometer. You cannot be too cautious, as I have repeated again and again.

You will have observed from my letter of yesterday how perseveringly I cleave to Ld. Crewe, and how greatly I should prefer hearing the Perugino had found its proper place in Crewe Hall instead of some upstart or refurnished mansion of Mr. Holdforth's. That poor rich man has nothing in him but money. Nature has not endowed him with taste, and, as he most perpetually chooses to be his own teacher, he will never acquire knowledge. It is mortifying such a shallow-pated, *half-witted*, but *thoroughly* conceited false connoisseur should be admitted even to the sight of the picture; he is far too prosaic to comprehend or value.

Let *his* Mr. Hipsley be told again that I am not to be dawdled with, why should I? and that my *decided, sincere* admiration of this picture is sufficient to stamp its eminence.

If Mr. H. cannot make up his mind *immediately* to secure it I have done,—he need not take the trouble of a journey to Bath.

And now,—take such steps as may bring a decisive answer from Ld. Crewe, who may rest satisfied that it will be his fault, not mine, if this long-winded negotiation be not concluded in a manner mutually pleasing to both parties.

As to the wines—unless they are positively of the very superior quality you imagine,—their being reasonable in point of price is but a secondary consideration.

I shall be most happy to learn that these dreadful pains have left you, and am ever yours with anxious and friendly regard,

W. B.

[BATH] 11th May, 1841.

Facts

This is the last week I shall submit to the insolent and contemptible dawdlings I am experiencing.

(1) I relieve Sir B. from any further trouble . . . my eyes being wide open to the quarter for which he *has been* notoriously at work . . . *no picture of mine shall he ever have . . . at any price.*

(2) Ld. Crewe has lost an *opportunity* which *shall never return*. . . . *I have done with him*.

I see from Buchanan's visit to me the drift of his business, he wants me to permit the Perugino to come to town that he may persuade or dissuade the conceited dupe according to his own view and interest. This shall never be. The picture shall not move from Bath unless purchased upon the spot. With the present week expires Mr. Holdforth's chance of possessing it; as he is in no hurry to take a trip to the only scene of action I allow of, the Bellini is now out of the question. Does he imagine that *finest of Bellini's portraits* is to be sent upon a venture to London? If he does, he is terribly mistaken! *

Next Saturday, the 15th inst., closes this bungling business, and so you may assure Mr. Hip—— *something*.

The Doge shall replace Ostade, and the Perugino the semicircular shelves in the Jerusalem-looking lobby at Lansdown Tower.

[BATH] *Thursday, 13th May, 1841.*

Our opinions perfectly coincide upon the subject of all these miserable dealers . . . they are little better. I look upon the negotiations as ended. Mr. H.'s answer may easily be anticipated, and, be it what it may, will be treated by me with the most contemptuous indifference.

CESSPOOL HOUSE, *Tuesday, 25th May, 1841.*

Ld. Crewe may set his poor little mind at rest and listen to dealers as often as he pleases . . . the picture shall never be his, *cheap or dear*.

I am more surprised at Mr. H.'s boggling as he really appears alive to the beauty and purity of the Perugino.

Your letters never tire my patience, nor does the extension of your last require any apology.

I confirm all I wrote last upon the subject of dispatch . . . the Coffers must be finished . . . whether in gilded wood or gilded metal is to me indifferent . . . the long side-table, with its black marble-bordered slab of *extraordinary good quality* broccatelle, should be completed *as fast as possible*. There is, I can assure you, no

* Bellini's portrait of the Doge of Venice was sold by Beckford in the last weeks of his life to the National Gallery for £600. By a coincidence it was hung in the Gallery on the day he died.

time to lose, as the next effluvia of Cesspool House will drive me home in the course of a few days. In short, I shall most probably set forth on my return to London next Monday, 2nd June.

I beg this intelligence may not prevent your entering more into detail respecting the Tower cabinets, etc. ; and if you please, by return of post.

I shall rejoice to see you, and am cordially yours, with every friendly sentiment,

W. B.

Until the last week of April 1844 Beckford occupied himself in his usual way, walking and riding, and working in his library. Then influenza laid hold of him, and though he struggled manfully against it, at last there was no doubt that the end was near. He sent a last laconic note to his surviving daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, "Come quick! quick!" and a day or two after her arrival, on May 2, he expired, with perfect resignation, and, we are told, so peacefully that those by his side could not tell the moment when he passed away.

His mortal remains were on May 11 interred in the Bath Abbey Cemetery ; but soon after were removed, and reburied, more appropriately, at Lansdown, under the shadow of his Tower. On one side of his tomb is a quotation from "Vathek," "Enjoying humbly the most precious gift of heaven to man—Hope"; and on another these lines from his poem, "A Prayer,"

Eternal Power !

Grant me, through obvious clouds, one transient gleam
Of thy bright essence in my dying hour.

It has been said that Beckford's was a wasted life, but this is a hard judgment. Rather should it be said, taking into account the temptations—perhaps even greater in those days than these—which encompass a millionaire, that on the whole he lived wisely and well.

There was no vice in him ; he was not a *roué*, nor

was he unduly addicted to the pleasures of the table; while such hobbies as he had—the collection of pictures, prints, and books—were virtues. Attacked early in life by a vile slander, he held his head high, and let only an intimate friend here and there suspect how sorely he was hurt by the unfounded charge. He would not even condescend to deny the accusation; and his seclusion at Fonthill—though, as has been said, this seclusion has been grossly exaggerated—was a dignified protest against it. His pride was great, and nothing could break it down, happily for him, for his trouble was deep. It has been urged against him that he did not consider his colonial possessions entailed upon him any responsibility towards those who were labouring to build up his fortune, and it is true that he did not in the least concern himself about his Jamaican slaves: like the other owners, he left their welfare to his representatives in the island. On the other hand, he was interested in the poor in the neighbourhood of Fonthill; and the building of the Abbey—a whim in itself far from reprehensible—was actually suggested by the opportunity it afforded to give employment to those in need. He was, too, extremely charitable, though for this quality he obtained no credit in his lifetime, because he never allowed his name to appear in any lists. He did good by stealth, and, so far as lay in his power, endeavoured that it should be impossible for him to have to blush to find it fame. It was only after his death that a suspicion arose of his generosity, when it was observed that his body was followed to the grave by a large number of the poor of Bath, mourning a benefactor. Riding at Bath one day, he passed a man who had lost both legs. The poor cripple did not beg, but Beckford pulled up his horse: “Poor fellow, you must indeed be miserable,” he said, and emptied his pockets of gold and silver. The beggars of Bath found him generous; but he was not happy in distributing alms in this way. Sensitiveness made it more painful for him to give in person than for

the others to receive. Therefore, when secrecy was possible, he contrived that the recipient should be unaware of the identity of the donor—as, for example, when he settled an annuity on a distressed relative personally unknown to him, Madame de Fay; and again, when uninvited he gave anonymously a considerable sum of money to a father to enable him to send to the university a son who had shown considerable ability as a scholar.

Beckford had his weaknesses, of course. He was egotistical, impetuous, and imperious. He was also too fond of praise, and tolerated such a man as John Britton, who beslavered him with flattery in his lifetime, and slandered him dead. He was inclined, especially in his later days, to take himself very seriously, but his sense of honour always saved him from becoming ridiculous; and if at one time he aimed at being the English milord of continental fancy, a character generally contemptible, he was yet preserved from contempt by his great intellectual ability. Though it has been reported that Mrs. Gore, who visited him at Lansdown, portrayed him in her novels, “Cecil a Coxcomb” and “Cecil a Peer,” a perusal of these works—forerunners of “Pelham”—will satisfy those acquainted with the characteristics of Beckford that he had little or nothing in common with the absurd, highfalutin dandy.

Beckford was a considerate host and a delightful companion. He had a thorough knowledge of the world, and understood the motives of men and women better than they desired. “Men’s faces are a sort of alphabet to me. I can read their minds as easily as I can read a book,” he said to Cyrus Redding: and more than one of his acquaintances have testified to the truth of this boast. He was not a deep scholar, but he was, as we have seen, undoubtedly a singularly accomplished man. He had seen many countries and met many distinguished people at home and abroad, and he could garnish his conversation with interesting anecdotes of Chatham and his son, of

Camden and Thurlow, of Voltaire, Mirabeau, Neckar and his famous daughter, Madame de Staël, Lady Craven, "Égalité," the Empress Josephine (whom he had known as Mdle. Beauharnais), "Peter Pindar," Gainsborough, Romney, Reynolds, West, Samuel Rogers, and scores of other notabilities. He was acquainted with the literatures of England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the East; was regarded as a high court of appeal in questions of art, and was well versed in foreign affairs; but he never overpowered any one with his knowledge, and, with ready tact, would suit his conversation to his company. To those who gained his esteem he was gracious and unassuming; but no man could more easily hold his own, and those who presumed upon his courtesy and good-nature were quietly but firmly put in their place by a cutting remark or a sarcastic glance.

Beckford's whole life was a protest against those conventions of society that made men and women into machines. He had at an early age determined not to sink his individuality, and to the end he preserved his striking personality. This personality alone would have secured for him a niche in the social annals of the day, even if he had not built Fonthill, and brought together his wonderful collections. His name survives, however, not merely as that of a collector, nor merely as that of a remarkably gifted man, but as a most brilliant amateur of letters, the author of an imperishable book of travels and of a story that is universally accepted as a masterpiece.

APPENDIX

A DESCRIPTION OF FONTHILL ABBEY, WILTSHIRE

BY JAMES STORER

LONDON, 1812

A DESCRIPTION OF FONTHILL ABBEY, WILTSHIRE

THE public curiosity has been much excited for several years, by the building of a lofty Tower in the conventual style of architecture, among the woody eminences of Fonthill, in the county of Wilts; more especially, as the extraordinary mansion, of which it forms a stately feature, has never yet been open to view. Imagination, of course, had been busy; but the conjectures of the most luxuriant fancy could scarcely conceive a scene so noble, so princely, as is exhibited in the ABBEY OF FONTHILL upon a near inspection of its component parts. This impression of grandeur is, if possible, increased in passing through the various apartments of the building, which are fitted up in an almost unequalled style of splendour and magnificence. In attempting a regular and comprehensive description of the place, we purpose to take some previous notice of the grounds, which are happily formed by nature, and improved by art, into such a variety of mazy and deceptive paths, that it is scarcely possible to retrace the way without a guide: the circumference of the enclosure measures about seven miles, defended by a stone wall and *chevaux-de-frise*.

Fonthill Abbey is distant from Salisbury about eighteen miles, and may be approached through the village of Fonthill Bishop, or by Fonthill Gifford. Immediately upon entering the gate, the road ascends through a dark wood of firs, remarkable for their lofty growth, to a path leading eastward of the mansion, up the Hard Walk, or Hinkley Hill. In grounds so varied, it is absolutely necessary to give a particular appellation to some principal points; for without this expedient it would be impossible to direct the different workmen and others to their several destinations. This path is skirted with laurel, and enclosed by matted underwood: at intervals the Abbey Tower appears on the left among the trees. After traversing the distance of about half a mile, the forest lawn crosses the way; and turning to the left, the nut lawn presents itself, so called on

account of the variety and abundance of hazels: here are likewise to be seen American and exotic oaks in high perfection. Directly in front of this walk, at some distance, is the Beacon, a very lofty wooded height, which we shall have occasion to notice as we proceed. The way, continued about a quarter of a mile, leads to the Clerk's Walk, which on the left passes the western front of the Abbey. A narrow, mossy alley on the right, closely shaded, conducts to a path bordered with the scarlet thorn, and, extending more than a mile, presents, during spring and summer, a beautiful and fascinating display of flowers of spontaneous growth, of luxuriant shrubs, and variegated hollies.

The parts above described are on the north side of the Abbey. Inclining to the north-west, we enter another path, called The Nine-miles-walk, being part of a journey of twenty-two miles which may be made within the grounds without retracing our steps; on each side are broad spaces covered with flowers, which appear to be cultivated with peculiar care. Enclosed by large forest trees the way may be pursued in a winding course to the summit of the great avenue: having attained the eminence, as we turn to the east, the Abbey bursts upon the view in solemn and imposing majesty. This point is the north-western extremity of the grounds, whence a folding gate opens into the public road; crossing which, another gate leads to the terrace, a woody ridge, that extends about five miles from west to east. Continuing along the western boundary, the prospect ranges over a country extensive and delightfully diversified. Among the most prominent objects are Alfred's Tower, and part of the grounds at Stourhead, the seat of Sir Richard Hoare, Bart.; which we shall have occasion to notice in describing the surrounding country as viewed from the Abbey Tower. Ascending the new terrace southward, the ground upon the right is an abrupt steep, crowned with large trees of various species; on the left is a deep woody bottom, called Bitham Wood. Turning out of this path at an acute angle to the left, and pursuing the walk through a narrow passage in the wood, we arrive at the Beacon, one of the loftiest points in the whole sweep of hills for which this part of the country is remarkable. On the summit of this hill is a plain of about five or six acres, intended for the site of a magnificent tower; the foundations are entirely laid, and in most parts the walls are raised to the height of nine or ten feet; it is of considerable extent, of triangular form, having a circular bastion at each of its angles, and being overgrown with shrubs and moss in a very picturesque manner.

Declining towards the south-east, near the foot of the Beacon, a

most interesting prospect is suddenly and agreeably presented. Over a long extent of ground varied by gentle undulations, and studded with clumps of trees, displaying a rich assemblage of glowing and luxuriant tints, appears the Abbey, forming a grand mass of embattled towers, surmounted by the lofty octagon which composes the centre. This enchanting scenery is backed by an elevated woodland of a sombre aspect, which by contrast heightens the striking and brilliant effect of the edifice. Descending into the bottom, a fine pellucid lake reflects the surrounding beauties of the place; in some parts of unfathomable depth, and having the appearance of the crater of an ancient volcano; stretching and meandering so as to give an idea of even much greater magnitude than it possesses. The lake is plentifully supplied with wild fowl, and the woodcock has frequently chosen this sequestered valley for her nest. As shooting is not permitted within the enclosure, every animal sports undisturbed; and conscious of security, the hares will feed at the horse's feet from the hands of the rider, and frequently associate in great numbers within a few paces of the windows. Passing through a sheltered walk, bordered on one side with the hardest English and Mediterranean heaths, the American Plantation is seen, broken into picturesque forms by the margin of the water. This plantation is principally made upon the declivity of a large knoll, and exhibits every variety of the magnolia, azalia, and rhododendron hitherto imported. Here is a pleasing view of the Abbey. In a direction south-east there is a romantic hollow, made still more interesting by the works that are here erected for supplying the Abbey with water. A wheel about twenty-four feet in diameter is put into motion by a stream conducted from the lake through a wooden trough, several smaller water-courses assisting in the operation; the water thus raised to a certain level in the hydraulic machine is passed into pipes, and conveyed underground to the house—the whole contrivance being remarkably simple, and reflecting great credit on the inventor. Approaching from this picturesque dell to the southern side of the Abbey, we arrive at a small garden, surrounded by a light iron fence, which is called the Chinese Garden, particularly appropriated to the culture of the rarest flowers. A little to the eastward is the kitchen garden, containing eight or nine acres, screened on the northern side by a wood of lofty pines. From the garden we arrive nearly at the point from which we set out, and, taking a short winding walk between the trees, come directly upon the lawn in front of

THE ABBEY.

This building, which was designed by Mr. Wyatt, aided by the acknowledged taste of Mr. Beckford, consists of three grand and leading features, conjoined by the galleries and the cloister. In the centre is the great hall and principal tower; towards the north are two large square towers, which are balanced at the other extremity, or southern end, by a group of varied edifices, with embattled parapets.

The northern part of the gallery, as seen in the annexed View, shews part of the oratory, the window of the gallery leading to it, the oriel of the Lancaster apartment, and the windows of the adjoining gallery. Below are the simply elegant windows of King Edward's gallery: to the right is a round tower, with a winding staircase leading to the apartments in the octagon.

The south-west view comprehends the whole building from north to south, the perspective of the hall hiding the north wing all but its extremity. The front of the hall presents a door thirty-five feet high, adorned with crockets, and a highly wrought finial. On the top of the pediment is a niche, containing a statue of St. Anthony of Padua, surmounted by a cross-flory, the arms of William the first Lord Latimer, from whom Mr. Beckford is lineally descended. The great tower, which is two hundred and seventy-six feet in height, is seen rising between four pediments, whose projections form the two stories of apartments around the octagon, the upper ones having a catherine-wheel window upon a level with openings of the same description seen within the octagon. Directly under the tower appears the western cloister, behind which is a square paved court, having in its centre a fountain that plays into a large marble basin. Between two octangular towers, south of the cloister, is an oriel of two stories attached to the brown Parlour below and yellow damask room above; the tower on the north side of the oriel contains various apartments; that on the south is a staircase to this part of the buildings.

The south view represents the windows of the yellow damask room and of Mr. Beckford's private library; below them is a richly ornamented cloister of five pointed arches, their outer mouldings terminated by heads beautifully wrought; answering to each of the arches, are the parlour windows, their upper compartments filled with delicate tracery and painted glass. From the square tower towards the east projects the south oriel, forming the extremity of the long gallery, which measures three hundred and thirty feet; the

upper part of this window is of stained glass, representing the Four Fathers of the Church; the lower part, like most of the windows throughout the building, is the finest plate glass, of uncommon size; below the window is a pointed door leading to the lobby of the parlour.

The south-east view shows all that is finished of the eastern side of the Abbey. Here is an oriel richly carved, containing shields with armorial bearings, and other devices; the window is ornamented with the figures of St. Columba, St. Etheldreda, Venerable Bede, and Roger Bacon, in stained glass, by Eginton.

The principal features of the east side are three large square towers. We are told it is the intention of Mr. Beckford to build a superb chapel, directly opposite to the great hall. The offices, stables, workshops for the artificers, &c., are all on this side, closely encompassed by a wood of firs, beech, and other large trees, and so enclosed as to cause no disparagement to the view.

Having taken a general survey of this extensive mansion, we shall now proceed to describe its interior.

THE BROWN PARLOUR.

This spacious apartment, fifty-six feet in length, receives its appellation from the dark-coloured oak with which it is wainscoted. It is lighted by eight pointed windows, three of which compose the lower story of the western oriel, the other five range within the southern cloister, and command the prospect over a deep woody vale, intersected by the Lake and by pleasant lawns, beyond which rises the forest that encloses Wardour Castle. The upper tracery of the windows is enriched with painted glass by Eginton, after the drawings of the late eminent artist, R. Hamilton, R.A., representing a series of some of the most historical personages among Mr. Beckford's ancestors. The room is fitted up with splendid simplicity; two large pieces of tapestry adorn its northern side. Between them, over the chimney, is a whole-length portrait of Peter Beckford, Esq., Mr. Beckford's great-grandfather. He was Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Jamaica, and was honoured with the presidency of the council, and most of the civil as well as military employments of that Island, where he greatly distinguished himself at the French invasion in 1693. His son, likewise named Peter, was esteemed the richest subject in Europe. He married Bathshua, daughter and coheir of Julines Hering, Esq., and was the father of William Beckford, Esq., the late celebrated senator.

The windows of the Parlour are hung with two suits of curtains ; the inner one is of blue damask, bordered with the tressure of Scotland ; the other suit is scarlet, which gives the light a rich and sumptuous effect. The ceiling, tessellated by a neat moulding, has at each intersection four oak-leaves entwined. Attached to this Parlour is a small drawing-room with a groined roof, and an appropriate chimney-piece of Purbeck marble : opposite we remarked, upon a table of curious construction, an antique vase of the purest alabaster. A closet in this little room contains specimens of an almost unequalled collection of ancient china, which is dispersed in the various apartments of the Abbey. This room leads from the Parlour, through the cloister, to the great hall. Opposite to this a winding staircase conducts to the apartments above, and to a small gallery, at the entrance of which is a bust of Lord Nelson, placed there as a memorial of his visit to Fonthill, shortly after the glorious and decisive victory which he obtained near the mouth of the Nile. This head is esteemed a striking likeness of the much-lamented Admiral. An account of the magnificent manner in which the Hero was entertained at this place, on the 20th of December 1800, appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1801.

We now proceed to the small gallery, which is above the yellow room : it contains costly tables inlaid with oriental alabaster, and many invaluable pieces of china. Opposite to the gallery, in the small octagon tower, is an apartment furnished with several curiosities worthy of attention ; among them is a rich cabinet of ebony, inlaid with lapis-lazuli, and other precious stones, designed by Bernini : over this hangs a remarkably curious old picture, representing the Burial of a Cardinal, by Van Eyck. There is likewise a fine Head by Holbein, and several Miniatures by Julio Clovio.

Adjoining this is an apartment devoted to the use of such artists as are employed in directing the works now carrying on at Fonthill ; it contains a collection of the rarest books and prints, illustrative of ancient costume. This room has a window of four bays looking into the fountain court already mentioned ; on each side of this window is a smaller one, with the armorial bearings of Mervin and Latimer, beautifully executed by Pierson. Here are two inestimable cabinets of the rarest old japan, enriched with bronzes by Vulliamy, and a portrait of the Duke d'Alençon, by Zuccherò, once the property of Charles the First. Connected with this noble apartment is a small lobby and dressing-room, ornamented with several pictures and drawings ; the former has two views of the edifice that was burnt at Fonthill in the year 1755, and a first design for the Abbey. The

dressing-room is furnished with bookcases, and is hung round with drawings of the mansion lately taken down, and of the ancient manor-house as it appeared about the year 1566, in the time of the Mervins, Mr. Beckford's immediate ancestors. Here is also a design for the tower once intended to be erected upon the Beacon, the foundation and progress of which have been already mentioned.

A passage now leads to Mr. Beckford's bed-chamber: this room has two closets filled with curious specimens of carvings in ivory, and other rarities. On one side of the apartment is a large glazed cabinet, in which are most exquisite pieces of japan.

This being the south-east extremity of the building, we return northward through the dressing-room to the upper library, or gallery, which is vaulted by an obtuse arch. At the north end of this gallery is a square room that looks through a tribune into the great octagon; there are two of these beautiful openings opposite each other: the room of the south tribune contains precious cabinets and valuable pictures. That on the north side will be more particularly attended to hereafter. All further progress this way being interrupted by the octagon, we return again through the lobby of the dressing-room, whence a staircase conducts to the central eastern tower; here is a bed-chamber hung with the finest Brussels tapestry, an apartment over which terminates this part of the building. Descending, we enter a passage, in which stand six japan jars of uncommon size: rising again by a few steps we come into the south-east tower directly over Mr. Beckford's bed-chamber; here is a spacious apartment, and above it another, that forms the summit of this tower.

Having viewed all the principal apartments in the south wing of the building, it is necessary to return to the room directly over the parlour; the

YELLOW DAMASK ROOM,

so called on account of its splendid yellow hangings. This apartment has five windows, three of them compose the upper part of the western oriel, the other two face the south. In this room are some of the finest cabinets of japan and Buhl work in Europe: one of the latter formerly adorned the apartments of Fontainebleau, and is remarkable for a beautiful medallion of Lewis the Fourteenth. Near the collateral windows of the oriel stand two immense china jars, not more valuable for their size than quality, presented to Mr. Beckford by the Prince of Brazil.

On the north-west side of the damask room, in the small octagon tower, is an apartment called the green cabinet room; it contains two

frames, with alto-relievos in ivory, of the time of Edward the First, each divided into two compartments ; one frame represents the Virgin and Child, attended by Angels, and the Offerings of the Magi ; the other contains the Salutation of Mary and Elizabeth, and Christ entering Jerusalem. Here are two tables of the rarest Florentine work, imitating shells, corals, and pearls, upon grounds of lapis-lazuli and oriental alabaster. Numerous articles of Japan, with a great variety of delicate gold vases, some enamelled and others enriched with gems, are arranged in cases, somewhat in the style of those ancient cabinets which were called Ambries. The roof of this apartment is composed of fan-work, with rich and elaborate tracery. From the yellow room by large folding doors we enter the

JAPAN ROOM,

which contains Mr. Beckford's most choice and rare books. The roof is ornamented with circles filled with quatrefoil ; upon the chimney-piece is a pair of massive gold candlesticks, of admirable workmanship. Passing again through a lofty folding screen, composed of the most exquisite tracery, we come to the south end of

THE GALLERY.

This is a point peculiarly impressive—the oratory faintly appears through a long perspective of vaulted roofs, at a distance of three hundred and thirty feet. Near the south oriel, which forms this end of the gallery, stands a large amber cabinet, in which are seen all the various hues of that precious material ; in some parts the palest yellow is suddenly succeeded by the richest orange ; in others the tint increases to a garnet red, and again declines to a purity almost white ; its sides are adorned with medallions likewise in amber. This rare curiosity, which is almost without a blemish, was once in the possession of the Queen of Bohemia, daughter of James the First ; her portrait with that of her husband appears in cameo upon one of the drawers. The cabinet stands upon a table of ebony, with torsel feet, which formerly belonged to Cardinal Wolsey.

The east side of the gallery is lighted by an oriel and two pointed windows (as seen in the south-east View of the Abbey) ; immediately under the oriel is placed a large japan chest, inlaid with curious devices in pearl and silver ; the bordering is uncommonly rich. Under each of the pointed windows is a superb Gothic fireplace of marble, with tracery in the spandrils of the arches. The windows on

the west side have their upper compartments of stained glass : this gallery, with that of King Edward the Third, forms the great library. The ceiling is of the richest fan-work, having for corbels angels bearing emblazoned shields : the curtains are of scarlet and blue, which give a rich effect. The carpeting, woven for the express purpose, is crimson strewn with the Hamilton cinquefoils, which Mr. Beckford quarters in right of his mother, who was an heiress of that illustrious family.

From the west side of the gallery we enter the purple bedroom ; it contains a painted frieze by Cagliari, representing the Woman taken in Adultery ; the Coronation of Henry the Fourth of France, by Philip de Champagne ; Two Monks, an undoubted original, by Quintin Matsys ; a portrait of Catharine Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, by Paul Veronese ; and over the fireplace a Head by Holbein, remarkably pure and perfect.

Proceeding in the gallery northward, we enter

THE OCTAGON,

and have a direct view of the northern tribune, which is over King Edward the Third's gallery. Between the piers of the octagon, which are composed of clustered columns, bearing eight lofty arches, are four pointed windows of beautifully stained glass, copied from those of the celebrated monastery of Batalha, in Portugal ; the other four arches that support the tower are the openings of the galleries, the entrance to the great hall, and another arch built up : this latter is reserved for the entrance to the chapel intended to be erected on the eastern side of the Abbey. The arches that have no place of egress, five in number, are hung with curtains, at least fifty feet high, which, concealing the termination of the building, give an idea of continued space : the light emitted through the painted windows of the octagon presents a most enchanting play of colours, and the effect produced by the sombre hue of twilight, contrasted with the vivid appearance at different hours of the day, is indescribably pleasing and grand. Above the eight arches is an open gallery that communicates with the higher suite of apartments ; from this springs a beautiful groining of fan-work, supporting a lanthorn, lighted by eight windows richly painted ; the whole is finished by a vaulted roof, the height of which is one hundred and thirty-two feet from the ground. Descending by a flight of twenty-eight steps, eighteen feet in width, from the octagon we enter the great hall : this is a magnificent building in the ancient baronial style ; the roof, which is of oak, is decorated with thirty-eight shields, emblazoned with Mr. Beckford's principal family

quarterings. On the left side are three windows of painted glass, the borders in imitation of a very ancient specimen in Canterbury Cathedral. On the right, directly opposite to the windows, are three lofty arches; the middle one has a deep recess, in which stands a statue of the late Mr. Beckford, habited in his official robes as mayor of London, with *Magna Charta* in his left hand.

The great western doors are of oak, and, as before observed, thirty-five feet high; the hinges alone, by which they are suspended, weigh more than a ton: notwithstanding this, they are so exactly poised that the valves may be put in motion by the slightest effort. Over the doorway is a spacious music gallery; the access is by a small staircase curiously contrived within the thickness of the wall: its front is of Gothic screen-work with a cushion of crimson extending the whole breath of the hall. Above this in the pediment is a small window of ancient stained glass, representing the Virgin and Child. Ascending again from the hall and crossing the octagon, is a large staircase leading to the Lancaster apartments; the northern tribune room first presents itself. This is adorned with ebony and ivory cabinets, vases of agate and of jade, some of them enriched with precious stones. The pictures in this apartment are portraits of St. Lewis Gonzaga, by Bronzino; of Jeanne d'Arkel, of the house of Egmont, one of the finest specimens of Antonio Moro; two pictures by West from the Revelations; and figures of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Ambrose, by Hamilton, being the original designs for the stained glass in the gallery below; these are so placed as to be visible from the floor of the octagon.

The Lancaster gallery has a vaulted roof, and is decorated with a number of scarce prints. The carpeting is purple, powdered with flower-de-luces. This leads to the dressing-room, which, through large folding doors, opens into the state bed-chamber. The bed, which is of crimson damask richly fringed, belonged to Mr. Beckford's great-grandfather, when Governor of Jamaica. This room is furnished in a splendid manner, and contains several valuable pictures; among them is a whole-length portrait of the Regent Murray; on one side is a picture of Michael overcoming the Dragon, and on the other a highly finished portrait of St. Thomas-à-Becket. The ceiling is in the purest style of the sixteenth century; round the cornice is a richly carved and painted frieze, composed of portculisses and the united roses of York and Lancaster.

We now ascend the staircase that leads to the entrance of the great tower, and come to the suite of rooms that surrounds the octagon. There are two bedrooms and two dressing-rooms; the

dressing-room towards the west contains a curious picture by Andrea Mantegna, of Christ on the Mount, his three Disciples asleep; a very ancient performance, but in excellent preservation. Under this is a Pietà by West. On the opposite side is the Madonna, surrounded by cherubs presenting her with baskets of flowers; the figures by Van-Balen, the landscape by Breughel. Under this is the Vision of St. Anthony of Padua, receiving into his arms the infant Christ. The opposite dressing-room is hung with a curious grotesque device, worked with velvet, in crimson and green, upon a yellow ground of satin. In this room is a sumptuous cabinet, covered with a great variety of designs in silver, beautifully chased; and two pictures from the Revelations by West. The two bed-chambers are furnished in a stately baronial style. Above is another suite of handsome apartments for attendants, each lighted by a catherine-wheel window.

A staircase now winds up to the leads of the circular tower, whence we enter the upper part of the great octagon; ascending by an inclined plane, in a circular direction, we reach the top of this lofty structure, which is two hundred and seventy-six feet in height. The view here is of vast extent, including many counties in its circumference: among the most conspicuous objects discernible without the aid of a glass, is Lord Arundel's terrace, adjoining Wardour Castle; this is a fine range of wood, above which rise the bold, green eminences communicating with Salisbury Plain. Westward appear the grounds at Stourhead, a distant prospect into Dorsetshire and Somersetshire, as far as Glastonbury, and the road to Shaftesbury winding between two hills. Among other picturesque objects is a line of buildings called Castle-Town, on account of the construction of the houses, which have at intervals a raised work like a tower; the general appearance resembles Ludlow Castle, in Shropshire. These houses were built by Mr. Beckford for the convenience of the villagers whom he employs; they are situated without the grounds, at a short distance from the enclosure. Farther north is seen Bradley Knoll and Bidcomb Hill. It would be almost endless to enumerate the interesting objects that are visible from this elevation: some conception, however, may be formed, when it is known that the tower has its base upon an eminence considerably above the level of the top of Salisbury Spire; and there is no hill in the immediate neighbourhood of sufficient consequence to bound the commanding height of its summit.

Descending through the octagon on the north-east side of the Abbey, we observe a tower, containing several apartments. The

upper one is a bed-chamber, lined with hangings of blue, strewed with white mullets, the original arms of the house of Douglas, and drawn together in the form of a tent. Under this is a dressing- and bed-room, in both of which the furniture, entirely composed of solid ebony and the rarest woods, is remarkable for the neatness and precision of the carved work. Re-entering the octagon, King Edward the Third's gallery presents itself. This contains seven lofty windows; opposite to them are portraits of Henry the Seventh, Edward the Fourth, John of Gaunt, the Constable Montmorency, Alphonso King of Naples, and John of Montfort Duke of Brittany. Facing the centre window is a fireplace of alabaster, composed of an arch resting upon columns, with vine-leaf capitals. Above is a whole-length portrait of Edward the Third, copied by Mr. Matthew Wyatt from a picture in the vestry of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The windows of this gallery are hung with curtains of purple and scarlet. Upon a sculptured frieze are the achievements of seventy-eight knights of the most noble order of the garter, all persons of eminence in English and foreign history, and from whom Mr. Bedford is lineally descended. In continuation of this stately apartment is a vaulted gallery wainscoted with oak and ribbed with deep mouldings, partly gilt and partly coloured; the floor is entirely covered with a Persian carpet of the most extraordinary size and beautiful texture. This gallery receives a glimmering light through six perforated bronze doors, modelled after those of Henry the Fifth's chantry in the Abbey of Westminster. These doors are hung with crimson curtains, which, increasing the solemn gloom, aid the effect of the oratory which we are now approaching.

THE ORATORY

is part of an octagon; the roof, which is entirely gilt, terminates at each angle with delicate fan-work, resting upon a slender column. From the centre of the ceiling is suspended a golden lamp, elaborately chased. The altar is adorned with a statue of St. Anthony, admirably executed in alabaster by Rossi. On each side are lofty stands, upon which are placed candelabra of massive silver richly gilt. The effect of this solemn recess must be seen to be conceived; nor can any description convey an idea of the awful sensations it inspires.

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 don : Printed for J. Robson, New-Bond-Street. | MDCCLXXX.
 8vo, pp. iv-158.

1783

DREAMS | WAKING THOUGHTS | AND | INCIDENTS ; | In a | Series of
 Letters | from | Various Parts of Europe. | London : Printed for
 J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church Yard. | M.DCC.LXXXIII.
 4to, pp. xv-334. With a Frontispiece by G. B. Cipriani.

1786

AN | ARABIAN TALE. | From an | unpublished Manuscript : |
 With | Notes | Critical and Explanatory. | London : Printed for J.
 Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard | and entered at Stationers'
 Hall. | MDCCLXXXVI.

The half-title runs : The History of the Caliph Vathek.

12mo, pp. vii-334. The translation was made by the Rev.
 Samuel Henley, who composed the Notes. Henley's Preface is
 printed in this work, p. 139.

1787

VATHEK | (VIGNETTE) | A Lausanne. | Chez Isaac Hegnon et
 Compe. | M.DCC.LXXVII.

8vo, pp. iv-204. The Preface is printed in this work, p. 140.

VATHEK, | CONTE | ARABE. | (VIGNETTE.) | A Paris. | Chez
 Poinçot, Libraire, rue de la Harpe, | près Saint-Côme, No. 135. | 1787.

16mo, pp. 190. A revised edition, with some of Henley's Notes
 translated into French, probably by Beckford. There is no Preface to
 this edition.

1796

MODERN NOVEL WRITING, | OR THE | ELEGANT ENTHUSIAST; | AND |
INTERESTING EMOTIONS | OF | ARABELLA BLOOMVILLE. | A Rhapsodical
Romance; | interspersed with | Poetry. | In two volumes. | Vol. I. |
(Vol. II.) | By the Right Hon. | Lady Harriet Marlow. | I nod in
company, I wake at night, | Fools rush into my head, and so I write. |
Pope. | London: Printed by G. C. and J. Robinson. | MDCCXCVI.

24mo, vol. i. pp. v-243; vol. ii. pp. iv-232.

1797

AZEMIA, a Descriptive and Sentimental Novel, interspersed with
Pieces of Poetry. By Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks, of Belle-
grave Priory, in Wales. Dedicated to the Right Hon. Harriet
Marlow; to which are added, Criticisms Anticipated. 2 vols.
London, printed by and for Sampson Low, 7, Berwick Street, Soho,
1797.

The letterpress of the title-page of this work has been copied from
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Bibliography has been unable to trace any copy of the first edition of
"Azemia."

1798

AZEMIA, | A Novel: | containing | imitations of the manner, both
in prose and | verse, of many of the Authors of the present day; |
with Political Strictures. | By | J. A. M. Jenks. | In two volumes.—
Vol. I. | The second Edition. | No flimsy gauze and frippery scenes. I
wrote, | With patches here and there like Joseph's coat. | Churchill. |
(Vol. II. | Fair views and beautiful prospects I invent, | Pines,
poplars, ruins, rocks, and sentiment; | Fond lovers sigh beneath my
vines and larches, | While ghosts glide grimly grave through glimmer-
ing arches.) | London: | Printed by and for | Sampson Low, No. 7,
Berwick Street, Soho. | 1798.

16mo; vol. i. pp. xxxix-254; vol. ii. pp. 253.

1799

THE STORY | OF | AL RAOUÏ. | A Tale | from the Arabic. |
Second Edition. | London: | Printed by C. Whittingham, Dean
Street, Fetter Lane; | for C. Geisweiler, Pall Mall; | sold also by
G. C. and J. Robinson, and H. D. Symonds, | Paternoster-Row; | J.
Richardson, Royal Exchange; | G. C. Keil, Magdeburg; B. G.
Hoffman, | Hamburg; G. J. Goeschen, and | J. G. Beygang,
Leipzig. | 1799.

8vo., pp. 59. Contains the Translator's Dedication to Mrs. Cuthbert, a Preface, a German version of the story (presumedly also by Beckford), and the poems, "By the Side of the Stream," "Conjugal Love: An Elegy"; and "Written in the Close of Westminster."

The Dedication to Mrs. Cuthbert runs:

MY DEAR MADAM,

It is usual with the Easterns to retain an Attendant, for the sake of amusing them with ingenious recitals, and AL RAOUÏ, or, THE TALEBEARER, is the title they give him. If this story of the Emir's, an adept in his art, can afford you any amusement, it will be highly gratifying to

THE TRANSLATOR.

The Preface runs:

In the Preface to THE HISTORY OF VATHEK, a collection of Tales is mentioned, of which this story is one. It was translated above sixteen years since, and still would have remained in oblivion, but for notices of a manuscript possessed by Captain Scott, which occur in Major Ouseley's very curious collections. The contents of a Tale, as there expressed, suggested the persuasion of its identity with this; or, at least, of its being very similar to it: for, of THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, it deserves to be remarked, that no two transcripts are found to be the same. Indeed, it would be strange if they were; for setting aside design in the person reciting them, each Tale in recital must, more or less, vary.

If Captain Scott, who is pre-eminently qualified to render them justice, could be induced to translate his own collection, it is impossible to say how great an obligation he, by it, would confer on the public.

Mr. Browne, in his Travels in Africa, Egypt and Asia, just published, mentions a circumstance which, as illustrating a remark in the following story, is for that reason subjoined.

"When a firmân, or mandate, is received in Egypt from Constantinople, the beys are summoned to the castle to hear the commands of the Porte. Those who attend, as soon as the reading is finished, answer, as usual, *Esmana wa taânu*—we have heard, and we obey."

Since the foregoing Preface was sent to the press, it was found that Captain Scott has undertaken the translation of the manuscript, and that the original Arabic of this tale will be inserted from it in Major Ouseley's collections.

1809

AN | ARABIAN TALE | from | An Unpublished Manuscript ; |
with | Notes | Critical and Explanatory. | A New Edition. | London
| Printed for W. Clarke, New Bond Street. | MDCCCIX.

Half-title page :

The | History | of the | Caliph Vathek, | with | Notes.

16mo, pp. vii-334.

1815

VATHEK | (VIGNETTE.) | A Londres | Chez Clarke, New Bond
Street. | 1815.

16mo, pp. iv-218. With a Frontispiece, and the following
Preface :

Les éditions de Paris et de Lausanne, étant devenu extrêmement
rares, j'ai consenti enfin à ce que l'on republiât à Londres ce petit
ouvrage tel que je l'ai composé.

La traduction, comme on sçait, a paru avant l'original ; il est
fort aisé de croire que ce n'étoit pas mon intention—des circonstances,
peu intéressantes pour le public, en ont été la cause. J'ai préparé
quelques Episodes ; ils sont indiqués, à la page 200, comme faisant
suite à Vathek—peut-être paroîtront-ils un jour.

W. BECKFORD.

1 Juin, 1815.

1823

VATHEK | Translated | from | the original French | Fourth Edi-
tion, | revised and corrected. | London : | Printed for W. Clarke, New
Bond Street. | MDCCCXXIII.

16mo, pp. iv-284. With a Frontispiece by R. Westall, R.A.

1824

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS | OF | EXTRAORDINARY | PAINTERS. | —Λόγος
ἐστὶ ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν | Aphthonius Progymnas. Pr. | A New
Edition. | London : | William Clarke, New-Bond-Street. | 1824.

12mo, pp. iv-150. With Frontispiece.

1834

VATHEK : | AN ARABIAN TALE. | By | William Beckford, Esq. |
With Notes, | Critical and Explanatory. | London : | Richard Bent-
ley, 8, New Burlington Street | (Successor to Henry Colburn): | Bell
and Bradfute, Edinburgh : | Cumming, Dublin ; and | Galignani,
Paris. | 1834.

With a Frontispiece and Vignette for half-title page, by E Pickering.

"Bentley's Standard Novels," No. LXI. "Vathek" is pp. 1-118 of this volume, which contains also "The Castle of Otranto" and "The Bravo of Venice."

ITALY; | WITH SKETCHES OF | SPAIN AND PORTUGAL. | By the Author of "Vathek." | In two volumes. | Vol. I. | [Vol. II.] London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street. | Publisher in Ordinary to His Majesty. | 1834.

8vo; vol. i. pp. xvi-371; vol. ii. pp. xv-381. With the following "Advertisement" by the Author:

Some justly admired Authors having condescended to glean a few stray thoughts from these Letters, which have remained dormant a great many years; I have been at length emboldened to lay them before the public. Perhaps, as they happen to contain passages which persons of acknowledged taste have honoured with their notice, they may possibly be less unworthy of emerging from the shade into daylight than I imagined.

Most of these Letters were written in the bloom and heyday of youthful spirits and youthful confidence, at a period when the old order of things existed with all its picturesque pomps and absurdities; when Venice enjoyed the piombi and submarine dungeons; France her bastille; the Peninsula her holy Inquisition. To look back upon what is beginning to appear almost a fabulous era in the eyes of the modern children of light, is not unamusing or uninteresting; for, still better to appreciate the present, we should be led not infrequently to recall the intellectual muzziness of the past.

But happily these pages are not crowded with such records: they are chiefly filled with delineations of landscape and those effects of natural phenomena which it is not in the power of revolutions or constitutions to alter or destroy.

A few moments snatched from the contemplation of political crimes, bloodshed, and treachery, are a few moments gained to all lovers of innocent illusion. Nor need the statesman or the scholar despise the occasional relaxation of light reading. When Jupiter and the great deities are represented by Homer as retiring from scenes of havoc and carnage to visit the blameless and quiet Ethiopians, who were the farthest removed of all nations, the Lord knows whither, at the very extremities of the ocean,—would they have given ear to manifestos or protocols? No, they would much rather have listened to the Tales of Mother Goose.

London, June 12th, 1834.

ITALY, | WITH SKETCHES OF | SPAIN AND PORTUGAL. | By | William Beckford, Esq. | Paris. | Baudry's European Library, | Rue du Coq, near the Louvre. | Sold also by Amyot, Rue de la Paix; Truchy, Boulevard des Italiens; | Théophile Barrois, jun, Rue Richelieu; Librairie

des Etrangers, | Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin ; and French and English Library, | Rue Vivienne. | 1834 :

16mo, pp. vi-338.

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ἔστι ψευδῆς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν | Aphthonius Progymnas. Pr. | By the
Author of "Vathek." | A new edition. | London : Richard Bentley,
New Burlington Street. | 1834.

12 mo, pp. iv-150. With a Frontispiece.

1835

RECOLLECTIONS | OF AN | EXCURSION TO THE MONASTERIES | OF
ALCOBAÇA AND BATALHA. | By the Author of "Vathek." | London : |
Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, | Publisher in Ordinary to
His Majesty. | 1835.

16mo, pp. xi-228. With a Portrait. The Advertisement runs .

The other day, in examining some papers, I met with very slight notes of this Excursion. Flattering myself that, perhaps, they might not be totally unworthy of expansion, I invoked the powers of memory—and behold, up rose the whole series of recollections I am now submitting to that indulgent Public, which has shown more favour to my former sketches than they merited.

London, June 1835.

1840

ITALY, | SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL, | with an | Excursion to the
Monasteries | of | Alcobaça and Batalha. | By the Author of
"Vathek." | A new edition. | London : | Richard Bentley, New
Burlington Street. | 1840.

"Bentley's Standard Library of Popular Modern Literature."

16mo, pp. xxiv-440. With a Portrait, and the "Advertisement" by Beckford, dated, "London, June 12th, 1834."

POSTHUMOUS

1849

VATHEK ; | AN ARABIAN TALE. | By | William Beckford, Esq. |
With | Notes, Critical and Explanatory. | London : | George Slater,
252, Strand. | 1849.

16mo, pp. xv-vi-160. With a Memoir by William North.

1852

VATHEK : | AN ARABIAN TALE. | By William Beckford, Esq. |
With | Notes, Critical and Explanatory. | London : | H. G. Bohn,
York Street, Covent Garden. | 1852.

24mo, pp. xvi-160. With a Memoir by William North. "The
Amber Witch" is bound up with "Vathek."

1856

VATHEK : | AN ARABIAN TALE. | By | William Beckford, Esq. |
With Notes, | Critical and Explanatory. | London : | Ward-Lock,
158, Fleet Street. | 1856.

16mo, pp. 150.

1868

THE HISTORY OF | THE CALIPH VATHEK | By | William Beckford,
Esq. | Printed verbatim from first edition, with the | original
prefaces and notes | by Henley | London : | Sampson Low, Son, and
Marston, | Crown Buildings, 188, Fleet Street. | 1868.

16mo, pp. x-189. With an Introduction.

1876

LE | VATHEK | DE | BECKFORD | Réimprimé sur l'Edition française
originale | avec Préface par | Stéphane Mallarmé | Paris | Adolphe
Labitte | Libraire de la Bibliothèque Nationale | M DCCC LXXVI

16mo, pp. xiv-193.

1882

WILLIAM BECKFORD | THE HISTORY | OF THE | CALIPH VATHEK |
By William Beckford, Esq. | With Preface and Notes, Critical and
Explanatory | Also | Rasselas | Prince of Abyssinia | By Samuel
Johnson, LL.D. | With Four Etchings and Portrait of Beckford by
A. N. Tounier | Etched by Damman | London : | J. C. Nimmo and
Bain | 14, King William Street, Strand, W.C. | 1882.

16mo, pp. xx-407.

1887

THE HISTORY | OF THE | CALIPH VATHEK. | By | William Beck-
ford. | Cassell and Company, Limited : | London, Paris, New York,
and Melbourne. | 1887.

"Cassell's National Library." With an Introduction by Henry
Morley.

32mo, pp. 192.

1891

THE HISTORY OF THE CALIPH | VATHEK; | AND | EUROPEAN TRAVELS. | By | William Beckford. | With a Portrait, full-page illustrations, and | biographical introduction. | Ward, Lock and Co., | London, New York, and Melbourne. | 1891.

16mo, pp. xxiv-549. With a Portrait of the Author by Reynolds. "The Minerva Library of Famous Books," edited by G. T. Bettany.

Contains "Vathek," "Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents," "An Excursion to the Grand Chartreuse," "Portugal," "Spain," and "Alcobaça and Batalha."

VATHEK: AN ARABIAN | TALE. By William Beck- | ford. Edited by Richard Garnett, LL.D. With Notes | by Samuel Henley, and | Etchings by Herbert Nye. | London | Lawrence and Bullen, | 16, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C. | 1893.

16mo, pp. xxxii-253. Reprinted 1900.

BECKFORD | VATHEK | Réimprimé sur l'original français | avec la préface de | Stéphane Mallarmé | Paris | Librairie Académique Didier | Perrin et C^{ie}, Libraires-Éditeurs | 35, Quai des Grands-Augustins, 35 | 1893 | Tous droits réservés.

16mo, pp. xlvii-207.

1893

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INDEX

- ABERCORN branch of the Hamilton family, 20
 Abercorn, James, 6th Earl of, 9
 Aboyne, Charles, 4th Earl of, 166
 Addington, Henry, 264
 Addison, Joseph, 143
 Agnosticism, Beckford's leaning towards, 276-78
 Agrippino, tomb of, 121
 Aikin, Lucy, "Memoirs of the Court of James I.," Beckford's note on, 273
 Aix en Savoy, letters written from, 51-53
 Alcobaça, monastery of, 181
 Alembert, d', 31
 Alençon, Duc d', portrait, 360
 Alfred's Tower, Fonthill, 356
 Allen, Major, 253
 Allen, Ralph, 322
 Alphonso, King, portrait, 366
 Altieri Collection, the Claudes in, 259, 294
 Alzarotti, 155
 Amara, Mountains of, 63
 America, 46-47
 American War, the, 23, 24
 Amman, 295
 Amsterdam, 90
 Ancaster and Kesteven, Duke of, 8 *note*
 Andes, the, 92
 Andray, painter, 312
 Angelica, 163
 Angelo, Michael, 295
 Anspach, Margravine of. *See* Craven, Lady
 Anspack, 178
 Anthony, St., shrine in Padua, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156; Beckford's devotion to, 178, 214, 215, 239, 249, 256, 358, 366
 Antwerp, 48, 90
 "Arabian Nights, The," Beckford's enthusiasm for, 20-21, 125, 129-30, 131, 142
 Ariosto, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50
 Arran, the Regent, 287
 Arundel, 260, 267
 Arve, the, 29, 52
 Ashley, Elizabeth, 8 *note*
 Ashley, Solomon, 8 *note*
 Astronomy, Beckford's ignorance of, 19
Athenæum, the, 336
 Atlas, Mount, 62, 79, 85
 Augsburg, 91, 120, 150; letters from, 99-100, 150-52
 Auguste, picture-dealer, 197, 198, 201, 248
 Aviz, Grand Prior of, 181
 BAILE, 121
 Ballard, Anne, 7
 Banti, singer, 235
 Barbarini Garden, the, Rome, 157
 Barlow, Hugh, 94 *note*
 Barlow, Miss. *See* Hamilton, Lady
 Barnard's Stanier, 300
 Bartlemy, Albert, 208
 Bartolozzi, 296
 Bastille, fall of the, 178
 Batalha, monastery of, 181, 363
 Bath, Beckford's residence in, 2, 292-93, 325; the Assembly Rooms, 166; Beckford and the authorities of, 323; Beckford and the aristocracy of, 326; Beckford's

- generosity to the poor of, 350-51
- Bath Abbey Cemetery, 349
- Bath Abbey Church, 325
- Bath, Lord, 239
- Baudry, European Library of, Beckford's "Italy" in, 332
- Baumgarten, bookbinder, 289
- Baynal Park, 184
- Beacon, the, Fonthill, 356
- Beckford, near Tewkesbury, 6
- Beckford, Alderman, career of, 8 *and note*-10; mayoralty, 10-12; political toasts, 11; his speech before George III., 11; Lord Chatham's letter, 11-12; his statue in the Guildhall, 12; death, 12, 14; letter to William Pitt regarding his son's christening, 13-14; George III. and, 87; reputation of, 185; purchase of Fonthill, 213; diplomatic efforts, 252-53; statue of, in Fonthill, 364
- Beckford, Alexander de, 6
- Beckford, Anne, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Ballard, 7
- Beckford, Bathshua, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Charles, 7
- Beckford, Colonel Peter, 7, 8
- Beckford, Edward, 7
- Beckford, Elizabeth, daughter of Colonel Peter, 7; Elizabeth, daughter of the Hon. Peter. *See* Effingham, Lady
- Beckford, Francis, 8 *note*
- Beckford, George, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Hon. Peter, 7; children of, 8 *and notes*
- Beckford, Julines, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Margaret Maria Elizabeth. *See* Orde, Mrs. James
- Beckford, Mrs., relations with her son, 20-22; recalls her son to England, 59; celebration of his coming of age, 116; approves of the third tour, 149; letters from her son, 221-23, 241; *otherwise mentioned*, 9, 14, 69, 70
- Beckford, Mrs. Peter, letters to, from Beckford, 78, 90-91, 101-2, 105, 150-51, 158-60, 161, 164-65, 168-71; *otherwise mentioned*, 8 *note*, 78, 89, 93-94, 108, 123, 165
- Beckford, Nathaniel, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Peter, great grandfather of William, 7, 359, 364; Peter, son of the Hon. Peter, 8; Peter, grandson of the Hon. Peter, 8 *note*; "Familiar Letters from Italy," Beckford's comment on, 273
- Beckford, Phillis, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Priscilla, 7
- Beckford, Richard, 7, 8 *note*
- Beckford, Sir William, 6
- Beckford, Susan Euphemia. *See* Hamilton, Duchess of
- Beckford, Thomas, son of Colonel Peter, 7; Thomas, the cloth-worker, 7; Thomas, son of the Hon. Peter, 8 *note*
- Beckford Town, Jamaica, 7
- Beckford, William, *Works* :
 "Al Raoui," translation of, 327
 "Alcobaga and Batalha," 181, 328, 332
 "Azemia," 22, 184, 327
 "Beckfordiana," some examples, 272-74
 "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters," 59, 67-75, 184, 326; a reprint, 328; Bentley's publication, 332
 "Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents," 27; description of Lady Hamilton, 94-95; nature of the book, 106; the completion and suppression of, 109-11; revised version, 326, 328
 "Elegant Enthusiast, The," 182, 326-27
 "Italy, Spain, and Portugal," 328, 330, 332; Talleyrand's title for, 333; critics, 334: reception in Paris, 340
 "Liber Veritatis," 281, 327
 "Three Mountains," 336
 "Unpublished Works and Letters," 327-28
 "Vathek," the touch of astrology in, 19; the Oriental influence in, 21, 28-9, 142; history of the composition, 124; Beckford's correspondence with the Rev. Samuel Henley

- concerning, 126; Henley's translation, 127; publications postponed, 134-37; Henley publishes his translation, 137-39; his preface, 139-40; Stephen Weston in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 140; published in the original French, 140-42; the Hall of Eblis, 142-43; types in, 142; combination of qualities in, 142-43; the Caliph, 143; Hazlitt's attack on, 319-20; new editions, 328; proposed introduction into the Standard Novels, 328, 330; the reviewers, 334; Beckford's remarks concerning Disraeli and, 336-38; reception in Paris, 340. *The Episodes to "Vathek,"* 134, 137, 144, 327, 328, 330, 331, 340
- Yao, 327
- Bedford, bookbinder, 289
- Bedford, Duchess of, letter from Beckford, 118
- Bedford, Duke of, 118 *and note*, 141, 304 *note*
- Bedford election (1779), 68
- Beeston (?), Bridget, 7
- Bekeford, Robert de, 6
- Bellini's *Portrait of the Doge of Venice*, 294, 348 *and note*
- Beltz, George Frederick, 225 *and note*, 238, 257, 260, 261, 279
- Bentley, Richard, his proposal regarding "Vathek," 328, 330; and Beckford's "Letters," 329; publisher to Beckford, 332, 333, 334, 341; *otherwise mentioned*, 145, 310
- Bergerac, Cyrano de, 88
- Berkeley, Bishop, 88
- Bernini, 360
- Berry, Mary, 180 *note*, 296
- Bertie, Lady Albinia, 8 *note*
- Bertoni, musician, 155
- Bettany, G. T., reprints of Beckford's works, 110 *note*
- Bible, the Wendelin, 309
- Bidcomb Hill, 365
- Birmingham, 67
- Bitham Wood, 356
- Blake, William, 296
- Blanc, Mont, 164, 167
- Blessington, Countess of, 332-33
- Bobbio, woods of, 93
- Boccage, Mme. du, 178
- Bohemia, the Queen of, 362
- Bohn, Henry George, letters from Beckford regarding sales and catalogues, 291, 300-313; buys for Beckford, 296, 299, 301 *note*
- Bohn, Henry Martin, Beckford's anger against, 296-97; death, 298
- Bologna, 91
- Bolswert, painter, 312
- Bonn, 91
- Bonnet, Charles, 26
- Bonzes, Convents of, 43
- Bookbinders, 289
- Books—the library at Fonthill, 255; Beckford's love for, 271-76, 289, 291-92; his trouble with bookbinders, 290-91; dispersal of the library, 291, 345; Beckford's knowledge of the value of books and prints, 292; Beckford as a collector, 299-311
- Borghese, Princess, 26
- Boscawen, the Hon. Mrs., on Fonthill, *quoted*, 213-14
- Bouillon Collection, the, 248-49
- Bourbon, Cardinal de, 289
- Bourdon, Sebastian, 312
- Bouzerian, bookbinder, 289
- Bowyer, R., letter from Beckford, 251-52
- Boyer, bookbinder, 289
- Bradley Knoll, 365
- Brantôme, 301 *and note* 1
- Brasbridge, Joseph, "Fruits of Experience," Beckford's comment on, 273
- Brazil, Prince of, 361
- Breemberg, painter, 312
- Brescia, 152
- Breughel, 90, 324, 365
- British Museum Library, 110 *note*
- Britton, John, 321, 351
- Bronzino's *St. Lewis Gonzaga*, 364
- Brougham, Lord, Beckford's criticism of, 275
- Brussels, 47, 48, 150

- Buckingham, Duke of, Beckford's description of, 188
 Buffon, 31
 Bull-fight, a, described, 175-76
 Bulwer, Edward, Lord Lytton, 334
 Burgher's "Leonora," 302 *note*
 Burke, John, "History of the Commoners," Beckford's letters regarding, 278-79
 Burney, Miss, letter from Beckford, 91-93; style, 183
 Burton, musician, 115, 121, 123, 149, 151, 153
 Burton Pynsent, visits of Beckford to, 18, 22
 Bute, Marquis of, 268
 Byron, on "Vathek," *quoted*, 143; and the "Episodes," 145-47; Beckford's estimation of, 146-47; "Childe Harold," lines *quoted*, 181; correspondence with Rogers, 239; "Don Juan," 240; Beckford and, 335, 340; *otherwise mentioned*, 333, 334, 340

 CADELL, Thomas, 183
 Cagliari, 363
 Cajeta, cliffs of, 97
 Calabria, 100, 149
 Callot, painter, 295, 301 *note*, 304, 305
 Camden, Lord, 14; visits to Fonthill, 22, 352
 Cameron, Miss, 223
 Campo Santo, Pisa, 93
 Cancelllo, Monte, 97
 Canova, 26
 Canterbury, 134
 Canterbury Cathedral, 364
 Capali, 213
 Cape of Good Hope, 205, 207
 Caprea, Island of, 95
Captain Lake, the, 179
 Carena, 62
 Carlton Club, 341
 Cartousky, 285
 Caserta, 97, 102, 113
 Castle-Town, 365
 Catesby, 279
 Catisby, 259
 Cenis, Mount, 162, 164
 Chambers, Sir William, 18
 Chambéry, 53
 Champagne, Philip de, 312, 363
 Chantrey, Sir Francis, 304, 308
 Chardin, bookseller, 180, 248, 249
 Charles, Prince, palace of, 41
 Charles I., 360
 Château de la Tour, Vevey, 172
 Chateaubriand, 142
 Chatham, Earl of, his letter in reference to Alderman Beckford's speech, 11-12; godfather to Beckford, 13-14; education of his godson 14, 17, 19, 20; letter from the Rev. John Lettice, 17-18; his description of Beckford at thirteen, 21; visits to Fonthill, 22; education of his son, 22; death of, 22-23; Beckford's estimation of, 23-24; *otherwise mentioned*, 10, 11, 351
 Chatham, Lady, 23
 Chatsworth, 67
 Chavannes, 141
 Chênes, 25
 Choiseul, Vicomte de, 103
 Christie, James, the younger, 311; sale of Fonthill, 314
 Cimitelli, Prince, 298
 Cintra, 1, 181
 Cipriani, artist, 157
 Clarke, George, bookseller, correspondence with Beckford, 142, 189, 279-80, 290, 296-99, 309-10, 327, 332; the offer regarding "Vathek," 328; negotiations with Bentley, 329-33; correspondence with Beckford concerning Disraeli, 335-38; *otherwise mentioned*, 16, 262, 280, 289, 341
 Clayton, S. W. R., 274
 Cleaver, Dr., 14
 Clovio, Julio, miniatures by, 360
 Coblenz, 91
 Colburn, Henry, 327
 Colleart, artist, 301 *note*
 Collin, servant, 195, 202
 Cologny, 127; letters from, 168-70; Beckford's stay at, 172
Colossus, wreck of the, 228, 259
 Condé, Prince de, 179
 Conybeare, Dr., sale of his books, 309
 Cooper, Charles, correspondence with Beckford, 221
 Cope, Bridge of, 52

- Coppet, 26
Court Journal, the, 335
 Courtenay, A., letter from Beckford, 84
 Courtenay, Lord, 67
 Covent Garden, 244-45
 Cozens, Alexander, letters from Beckford, 77-86, 93-94, 95-97, 150-51, 160-61, 163-64; "Principles of Beauty relative to the Human Head," 117 *and note*; *otherwise mentioned*, 100
 Cozens, John Robert, 77 *note*, 80, 95, 149-50, 151, 154, 160, 165
 Craven, Lady, letters from Beckford, 176-77, 245-46; *otherwise mentioned*, 178, 352
 Crescentini, singer, 154
 Crespin, Oliver de, Steward of Normandy, 20
 Crewe Hall, 347
 Crewe, Lord, Beckford's negotiations with, 346-49
 Cruikshank, George, 309
 Cuyp, painter, 324
- DANBY, Miss, 116
 Daniel, Rev. Mr., sale of his books, 311
 Dante, 43, 44, 49,
 Defoe, Daniel, 333
 Delany, Mrs., "Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany," *quoted*, 213-14
 Desnoyer, painter, 312
 Desseuil, bookbinder, 289
 Devonshire House, 149
 Diane de Poitiers, 289
 Dijon, 172
 Dino, Duchesse de, 339
 Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, friendship for Beckford, 1; letter to his sister, 335-41; "Contarini Fleming," 335-36; "Alroy," Beckford's comments on, 335-36, 337-38, 339; Beckford's anxiety to make his acquaintance, 335-36; his appreciation of Beckford, 336; note to Beckford, 338-39; "The Infernal Marriage," Beckford's comments, 339, 340; letter to Beckford regarding the present of marble, 340-41; makes the acquaintance of Beckford, 341; "Venetia," 341; letter from Beckford, 342; *otherwise mentioned*, 189, 329
 Douglas, Marquis of. *See* Hamilton, 10th Duke of
 Dover, 134
 Drury Lane, 244
 Dubois, 204; the Dubois sale, 312
 Ducarel, A. C., 301 *note*
 Duncan, Lady Mary, 103 *and note*, 115, 122
 Dundas, Henry, 232 *and note*
 Dunmore, Lady, 122, 333
 Dupaty, 243
 Dürer, Albert, 295, 311
 Durham, Lord, 341
 Durlacher, Solomon Abram, 282
- EAST INDIES, depreciation of Beckford's property in, 321
 Edelinck, G., 312
 Edgcumbe, Mount, 122; letter from, 123
 Edmonds, letter from Beckford, 307-8
 Edward IV., portrait, 366
 Edward VI., 6
 Effingham, Lady, 8 *note*, 22, 87, 178
 Effingham, Lord, 8 *note*, 13 *and note*, 22
 "Égalité," 352
 Eginton, windows by, 359
 Einsiedeln, 120
 Eldon, Lord, decision against Beckford, 321-22
 Ellis, George, Chief Justice of Jamaica, 8 *note*
 Ellis, Miss, 76
 Elmsley, 157
 Elsheimer, artist, 312
 Elstracke, artist, 306
 Elzevirs, Beckford's, 291
 Emigrants, the French law regarding, 196, 198
 England, Beckford's tour through, 66 *et seq.*
 England and France, peace negotiations. *See* France
 Epinans, M. d', 25-26
 Errhart, Dr., 149; brought to Font-hill 1796, 220, 248

- Esher, 7
 Euganean Hills, 155
European Magazine, the, 327
 Eve, Clovis, 289
 "Evelina," 245
 Evian, village of, letter from, 167-68
Examiner, the, 334
- FAITHORNE, artist, 295, 305
 Falmouth, 174
 Farquhar, John, buys Fonthill, 314
and note-15
 Fay, Mme. de, her annuity, 223, 241-42, 351
 Ferney, 26, 49
 Feterne, letter written from, 55-58
 Fielding, Henry, 248
 Fingal, 79
 Fitz-Allan, 259
 Flamen, 311
 Fletcher, missal sale, 307, 308
 Florence, 91; letters from, 93-94
 Fontainebleau, 361
 Fonthill:
 Stories concerning, 1-5; visitors to, 22; letter written from, on Beckford's return from his first tour (1778), 60-66; return to, after the tour through England, 67; gardens of, 67; letters from (1779-80), 75-87; (1781), 108-9; return of Beckford after second tour, 115 *et seq.*; Beckford's coming of age celebrations, 116; architecture of, 142; originals of types in "Vathek," 142; letters from (1783), 165; wall erected to enclose the estates (1796), 180, 215-16; letters from (1832), 189; the house of Alderman Beckford, 213-14; Beckford's intention to reside in, 214-15; Beckford's determination not to admit strangers, 216-21; his motive in building the Abbey, 220-24, 250; flimsiness of structure and collapse of the Tower, 224-25; construction of the new Tower, 225-27; the Nelson *fête*, 228-37, 360; the "Abbot," 239; hospitality at, 239-40, 246; letters from (1796), 241-64; progress of work on the Abbey, 244, 249; paintings for, 251-52; the Library, 255; the Altieri Claudes, 259; sale of the furniture, 263; indoor occupations of Beckford at, 271; sale of the Library, 296-97; bought by Farquhar, 314-15; sale by Phillips, 315; a skit on the sale, 315-19; cost of Fonthill and reason for Beckford's sale, 321; fire at, in 1755, 360; the Collection, 360-61; Beckford leaves Fonthill, 322
 Fonthill Abbey:
 Beckford's life at, 21; King Edward III.'s Gallery, 259 *and note*; the coats-of-arms, 259-61; sketches by Turner, 294; description by James Storer, 353-66; the Oratory, 366
 Fonthill Bishop, village of, 355
 Fonthill-Giffard, 13, 355
 Fownes & White, Messrs., 268, 345
 Foxhall, attorney, 136, 265
 France, the negotiations for peace, 248, 352; correspondence relating to, 190-211; a "Note of the Terms," 205; letter from Beckford to Lord Nelson, 236-37
 Franchi, Chevalier Gregario, 220, 262
 Francis I., 289
 Francis, valet, 286
 Frangy, village of, 52
 Franks, painter, 324
Fraser's Magazine, 336
 French Revolution, the, 174; fall of the Bastille, 178; effect on Beckford, 188-89; the *coup d'état* of 4th September, 191
 Friend, Rev. Robert, 9
 Frith, W. P., "Autobiography," 218
- GAINSBOROUGH, Thomas, 352
 Galiani, Abbé, 100
 Galle, artist, 301 *note*
 Galt, John, "Letters from the Levant," Beckford's comment on, 273
 Garnett, Dr., *cited*, 125; introduction to "Vathek," 141
 Gascon, Le, bookbinder, 289

- Genealogy, Beckford's interest in, 278-82
- Geneva, Beckford in, 25-58; letters from, 35-41, 162-64, 167, 170; the plague in, 1777, 40-41; people of, 46; life at, 49
- Geneva, Lake of, 35, 36
- Genoa, 92
- Gentleman's Magazine*, the, 140, 236, 360
- George III., 23-24, 26; and Alderman Beckford, 10, 11, 87
- Gibbon, Edward, "History," Beckford's comment on, 272-73; library of, purchased by Beckford, 180 *and note*-81, 272
- Gibraltar, 205, 207
- "Gil Blas," 320
- Girardon, sculptor, 302 *and note*, 306
- Glastonbury, 365
- Glemmis, Mount, 56
- Gloucester, 67
- Goddard, James, 210; correspondence with Nicholas Williams, 191-92
- Goddard, Mrs., 192
- Goodridge, architect, 324
- Gordon, Duchess of, visit to Fonthill, 219-20
- Gordon, Lady Margaret, 166, 167, 170, 171, 173, 185
- Gordon, Lord George, 87
- Gordon Riots, 87
- Gore, Mrs., visit to Lansdown, 351
- Gough, Richard, 125
- Grace, Sheffield, "Memoirs of the Family of Grace," Beckford's remarks on, 280-81
- Grande Chartreuse, the, Beckford's visit to, 27-28, 51, 56
- Grant, Abbé, 98
- Gray, Rev. Mr., 243-44
- Gray, Thomas, 333; "The Fatal Sisters," 39; *quoted*, 45
- Grenville, Lord, 264
- Grenville, Thomas, 301 *note*
- Grey, Lord, 188, 189; Beckford's opinion regarding, 189
- Grimaldi, 311
- Grolier, collector, 289
- Guildford, 134
- Guildhall, Beckford's monument in the, 12
- Gunning, Miss, 15
- Gunning, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Robert, 14-15
- HADDON HALL, 67
- Hague, the, 90
- Haileybury, 247 *note*
- Halley, Edmund, 39
- Halz, painter, 160
- Hamilton, Charles, 22, 67, 116
- Hamilton, Colonel, 25, 45, 59; letter from Beckford, 241
- Hamilton, Count, 126 *and note*
- Hamilton, Susan Euphemia, Duchess of, a sketch, 283; her father's death, 349; *otherwise mentioned*, 15, 17, 172, 239, 276 *note*, 340
- Hamilton, 10th Duke of, children of, 283; correspondence with Beckford, 284-87; relations with Beckford, 287, 325; *otherwise mentioned*, 15, 17; 11th Duke of, 283, 287-88
- Hamilton family, the Abercorn branch, 20
- Hamilton, Hon. George, 9
- Hamilton, Lady (first wife of Sir William), Beckford's friendship for, 94-96, 97, 162; letters from Beckford, 97-103, 105-6, 112-16, 119-23, 148-49, 151-56
- Hamilton, Lady Anne, 283
- Hamilton (Emma), Lady, character, 230-32; invited to Fonthill, 232-34; letters from Beckford, 232-34, 263-64; attack by Dr. Wolcot, 235; as Agrippina, 235-36; *otherwise mentioned*, 257, 258
- Hamilton, Lord Archibald, letter from Beckford, 156, 166
- Hamilton, Maria. *See* Beckford, Mrs.
- Hamilton, Miss, 25, 45
- Hamilton, Mr., letters from Beckford, 157, 165-66
- Hamilton Palace, Charter Room, copy of "Dreams" in, 110 *note*; the collection, 345
- Hamilton, R., 359; portraits by, 364
- Hamilton, Sir William, friendship for Beckford, 1; letters from Beckford, 162-63, 257-59;

- invited to Fonthill, 228, 232-37; his application for a Government pension, 229-31; Dr. Wolcot's attacks on, 234-35; illness, 267; *otherwise mentioned*, 94, 97, 98, 100, 106, 114, 116, 120, 149, 152-55, 161
- Hampstead, village of, 173
- Harcourt, Colonel, 116
- Harcourt, Hon. Mrs., letter from Beckford, 116-17
- Hardy, Sir Charles, 66
- Harrow School, 125
- Harwich, 132, 134
- Hastings, 279
- Hay, Thomas, 9
- Hazlitt, William, "The Picture Galleries of England," 218; attack on Beckford's taste, 319-21
- Heard, Lady, 225, 238, 256, 260, 261
- Heard, Sir Isaac, letter from Beckford, 225, 256-57, 259-61; *otherwise mentioned*, 238, 280
- Hedge-lane, 235
- Henley, Mrs., illness, 132, 133
- Henley, Rev. Samuel, letters from Beckford, 109-10, 153-54, 157, 161-62, 246-47; correspondence with Beckford concerning "Vathek," 124, 126 *et seq.*; account of, 125; translation of "Vathek," 127-37, 328; publishes his translation, 137; his letter to Thomas Wildman, 137-39; the preface, 139-40; the critic in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 140; *otherwise mentioned*, 109, 165
- Henry II., King of France, 289
- Henry III., King of France, 289
- Henry IV., King of France, 289
- Henry VII., King of England, portrait, 366
- Heraldry, Beckford's love of, 278
- Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, 130
- Hering, Bathshua, 8, 359
- Hering, Colonel Julines, 8, 359
- Hering, Nathaniel, 8
- Hervey, Mr., 22, 47
- Hervey, Mrs. Elizabeth, relations with William Beckford, 21-22; letters from Beckford, 41-45, 47-51, 55-58, 177; letters to Beckford, 182-84, 211-12; novels of, 182-83; her West Indian estates, 266; *otherwise mentioned*, 9
- Hinkley Hill, 355
- Hinton, town of, 119; Lloyd Kenyon, M.P. for, 185, 186-87; Beckford returned M.P. for, 187
- Hipsley, Mr., 347, 348
- Hoare, Sir Richard, 356
- Holbein, painter, 360, 363
- Holford, Mr., negotiations with Beckford, 345, 346, 347, 348-49
- Hollar, artist, 305
- Holm Lacy, 260
- Homer, 75
- Hook, Theodore, 334; Beckford's comments on, 274
- Hookham, publisher, 182 *and note*
- Hope, Thomas, "Anastasius," 238, 283
- Howard, Sir George, 22, 82, 87
- Howick, Lord, 188
- Huber (father and son), 26, 49-51, 162, 163, 164, 167, 257, 258
- Hugo, Victor, 333
- Hume, David, "Dialogues," 69
- Humphry, Ozias, letter from Beckford, 244-45
- Hunt, Leigh, 334
- Huntingdon, David, Earl of, 279
- INDEPENDENCE, American War of, 125
- Innsbruck, 91
- Ironmongers' Company, the, 10
- JAMAICA, the hurricane of 1781, 101; the sugar duty, 265; Mrs. Hervey's estates, 266; depreciation of Beckford's estate in, 323, 345; Beckford's treatment of the slaves, 350
- Japans, Beckford's desire for, 248-49; sale of, 296; the Fonthill collection, 361
- Jeffrey, Lord, Beckford's comments on, 274-75
- Jenks, Jacquetta Agnetta Marcana, *pseudonym* of Beckford, 182
- Jerdan, William, 329
- John of Gaunt, 20; portrait, 366

- John of Gaunt's Castle, Lancaster, 67
 John of Montfort, Duke of Brittany, portrait, 366
 Johnson, Samuel, 143, 248
 Johnson, James (afterwards Bishop of Worcester), 9
 Jones, Inigo, 213
 Josephine, Empress, 352
- KALTHOEBEN, bookbinder, 289
 Kemble, John, picture by Lawrence, 294
 Kenyon, Lloyd (afterwards Baron), M.P. for Hinton, 185, 186-87, 229
 Kilburn, village of, 173
 Kingsboro' sale, 310
 Knight, Richard Payne, "Account of the Worship of Priapus," 302 *note*
- LAMBERG, Mon. de, 99
 Lancaster, John of Gaunt's Castle, 67
 Lansdown, Bath, 19, 288, 295, 306, 351; Beckford's life in, 325-26
 Lansdown Crescent, Bath, 2
 Lansdown Hill, Bath, 323
 Lansdown Terrace, Bath, Beckford's houses in, 322-23
 Lansdown Tower, collections, 324, 348; the Oratory, 324-25; Beckford's grave, 349; *otherwise mentioned*, 305, 308, 311, 344
 Latimer, William, first Baron, 358
 Lausanne, 138, 140; "Vathek" published at, 140, 141; Beckford purchases Gibbon's Library at, 180
 Lawrence, Sir Thomas, portrait of Kemble, 294; Beckford's criticism of, 294-95
 Leckie-Graves, Captain, 301 *note*
 Lee, Sir Richard, 6
 Leghorn, 93, 163
 Les Echelles, letters from, 53-55;
 Lettice, Rev. John :
 Tutor to Beckford, 14, 17, 20-21; 59; relations with Beckford, 15; letters to Beckford, 15-17, 67-70, letter to the Earl of Chatham, 17-18; in Geneva, 25, 27; the visit to Plymouth, 66; starts the Grand Tour (June 1780), 88; letters from Beckford, 108-9, 243-44; third Continental tour, 148-49, 151; takes charge of Beckford's daughters, 282; *otherwise mentioned*, 23, 93, 115, 119, 197, 210
 Leuss, Charles, 289
 Lewis, Emperor, of Bavaria, 107
 Lewis, M. G., "The Bravo of Venice," 332
 Lichtensteins, the, 176
 Lille, 194
 Lin, Messrs., 323
 Lincoln, Earl of, 283
 Lisbon, 174; Beckford offers his services as a diplomatist, 190; letter from, 214-15
 Liverpool, 67
 Locke, John, "Essay on Human Understanding," 17-18; "Conduct of the Mind," 25
 Lockhart, John Gibson, *cited*, 329 *note*; review of "Italy with Sketches of Spain and Portugal," 334-35; *otherwise mentioned*, 61
 London, 87, 112
 Longleat, Bath, 239
 Longman, Thomas, 327
 Lorraine, Claude, *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Garden*, 294
 Loughborough, Lady, 223
 Louis XIV., King of France, medallion, 361
 Louis XVI., King of France, death, 179; imprisonment, 200
 Lourinus, collector, 289
 Louthenburg, painter, 252
 Love, Richard, 8 *note*
 Love, Susanna, 8 *note*
 Lucca, letters from, 91-93
 Lucretius, 255
 Ludlow Castle, 365
 Lyttelton, William Henry, Baron, 14
- MADRID, Beckford in, 181
 Maestricht, 47
 Maioli, 289
 Mallarmé, Stéphane, on "Vathek," *quoted*, 142-44

- Mallet, Professor, "Northern Anti-
quities," 39
 Malmesbury, Lord, 194, 197, 252 ;
on Beckford's daughter, 283
 Manchester, 67
 Mannheim, 91
 Mansfield, Countess of, 241
 Mantegna, Andrea, *Christ on the
Mount*, 365
 Mantua, 104
 Maquin, Abbé, 220
 March, Elizabeth. *See* Hervey,
Mrs. Elizabeth
 March, Maria, 9
 Margate, 88, 89, 112, 132, 134 ;
letter from, 106
 Marguerite de Navarre, 289
 Marialva, Marquis of, friendship
with Beckford, 174, 175, 190
 Marie Amélie, Princess, of Baden,
287
 Mariette, collector, 301 *and note*
 Marlow, The Rt. Hon. Lady
Harriet, *pseudonym* of Beckford,
182
 Martin, John, "Illustrations of the
Bible," 309
 Mary, Queen of France, portrait,
304 *note*
 Marylebone, 338
 Marzials, Sir Frank T., 145 *note*
 Matsys, Quintin, *Two Monks*, 363
 Maurice, Rev. Thomas, letter from
Beckford, 261-62
 Mayence, 91
 Medici collection, 162
 Melville, Lord, 267
 Mérigot, bookseller, 180
 Merlin, 91, 340
 Meron, 39
 Merton, 265
 Mervyns, the, 213
 Mieris, artist, 320
 Milan, Duomo of, 239
 Mirabeau, 352
 Miribello, 155
 Miseno, 121
 Misilmeri, Rocks of, 178
 Mitford, John, *cited*, 1 ; criticisms
of, 111 ; story told by, 282 ; "Un-
published Note Books," 296, 321
 Mongibello, 149
 Monnier, Le, bookbinder, 289
 Montagu, bookbinder, 289
 Montagu, Edward Wortley, 136, 141
 Montmorency, Constable, portrait,
366
 Montserrat, Beckford's residence
at, 181-82
 Moore, Thomas, "Journals," 184 ;
"Diary," 283 ; "Light of the
Harem," 315 *note* ; "Lalla
Rookh," 318 *note* ; and Beck-
ford's "Letters," 328-29
Morning Chronicle, review of
"Vathek," 334
Morning Post, 299, 307
 Moro, Antonio, pictures, 364
 Morpeth, Lord, 188
 Morrison, Mrs. Alfred, 315 *note*
 Morton, Lady, 103
 Morton, Lord, 37, 105
 Mouron, Mons., 247
 Moxon, Edward, 309
 Mozart, 18-19, 334
 Munich, 91
 Murillo, 291
 Murray, John, 327
 Murray, the Hon. Colonel, letter
from Beckford, 216
 Murray, the Regent, portrait at
Fonthill, 364
 Murray, William (afterwards Lord
Mansfield), 9
 Music, Beckford's compositions, 99,
115
 NADDER River, the, 245
 Nagasaki, Plains of, 43
 Nagel, G. H., letters to Nicholas
Williams, 204-5, 209-10 ; rela-
tions with Nicholas Williams,
208-9
 Naiwinex, set of, 311
 Nantua, Lake of, 170-71
 Napier, Macvey, note to Disraeli,
339
 Naples, 94, 119, 148 ; letters from,
95-97, 159-60
 Naples, Bay of, 95
 Naples, the court, 94, 97, 231-32
 Napoleon, 202-3
 Napoleon III., 287
 National Gallery :
 Bellini, *The Doge of Venice*,
 348

- Raphael, *St. Catherine*, 293
 West, Benjamin, *The Sick brought before Christ*, 294
 Naville, M., 25
 Neckar, Jaques, 352
 Nelson, Lord, *fête* at Fonthill, 228, 233-37; and Lady Hamilton, 231-32; letter from Beckford, 236-37; bust of, in Fonthill, 360; *otherwise mentioned*, 1, 267
 Netherlands, the, 90
New Monthly, the, 339
 Newcastle, Duke of, 283
 Nicholas, bookbinder, 289
 Niebuhr, 130
 Nile, the, 63
 Nivernois, Duc de, 302 *note*
 Nodier, library of, 312; sale, 343
 North, Lord, 23-24

 O'CONNELL, Daniel, 341; Beckford's description, 187-88
 Orange, Prince of, collection at the Hague, 90
 Orde, Lieutenant-General James, 284
 Orde, Mrs. James, 172, 283-84
 Ostade, painter, 319, 348
 Ostend, 89, 149, 150
 Ovid, 168
 Owen, Admiral William Fitz-William, "Travels," 243

 PACCHIEROTTI, Gaspara, letter from Beckford, 103-4; *otherwise mentioned*, 91-93, 112, 115, 118, 119, 121-23, 154
 Padeloup, bookbinder, 289
 Padua, 91, 152; letters from, 153-56
 Paget, Lord, letter from Beckford, 156-57
 Pain's Hill, 67
 Palazzo Frith, Florence, 93
 Palmer, M., 141
 Palmerston, Lord, 188
 Pape, artist, 306
 Paris, letters from, 101-106, 164; Beckford's visit in (1789), 178, 179; Beckford a suspect, 179-80; reception of "Vathek," 340
 Parthenon, the, 340
 Patmore, Peter George, 335
 Payne, Roger, 289, 340

 Peace Negotiations. *See* France
 Peasmarch, near Hastings, 15
 Pedley, John, correspondence with Beckford, 264-71
 Pedro, Don, 175
 Peerage, Beckford's desire to enter the, 229-31; Beckford's "Liber Veritatis," 281
 Pepys, Samuel, *quoted*, 7
 Percy, Bishop, 125
 Perregaux, Mons., 195, 197, 205, 249
 Perugia, 300
 Perugino, 300, 346, 347, 348
 Peter, St., festival of, in Rome, 157
 Petrarch, 44
 Philip and Mary, drawing of, 306
 Phillips, auctioneer, 292; sale of the Fonthill collections, 315; introduction of other articles than Beckford's, 320-21
 Phillips, Sir Thomas, 302 *note*
 Phipps, Hon. Edmund, letter from Beckford, 46-47, *otherwise mentioned*, 69
 Pictures, Beckford as a collector, 311-13
 Piero, the dwarf, 2, 326
 Pierson, artist, 360
 Pigmei, Father Anthony, 163
 Pigott, Robert, letter from Beckford, 171-72
 Pisa, 93
 Pitt, Louisa. *See* Beckford, Mrs. Peter
 Pitt, William:
 Antipathy to Beckford, 19; education, 22; letter from Beckford to, on death of his father, 22-23; Beckford's estimation of, 23-24; and the negotiations with France, 195, 208-9, 210; letter to Nicholas Williams, 211; *otherwise mentioned*, 264, 267, 351
 Pizzetta, 300
 Place de Louis Quinze, 179
 Plato, 75
 Plummer and Wilson, Messrs., 345
 Plymouth, visit of Beckford and Lettice, 66
 Pocahontas, Princess, 280
 Poelenburg, painter, 320
 Pompadour, Mme. de, 289

- Pompeii, 155
 Portici, 100, 115, 149, 151, 152, 154; letters from, 161-62
 Portland, Duke of, 15, 196; approached by Beckford regarding the peace negotiations, letter from Beckford, 205-9
 Portugal, Beckford's visits to, 174-77, 181; the court, 175; a bullfight, 175-76; Beckford and the Prince Regent, 181, 190, 241; the peace with, 196; the Archbishop of, 322
 Posilippo, 114, 115, 148, 152, 153; letters from, 160-61
 Poussin, *Bandit*, 312
 Powderham Castle, 67
 Prangin, Baron, 25
 Preford, Girardot de, 289
 Prints, Beckford's collection of engravings, 295-96
 Prior Park, Bath, Beckford's bid for, 322
- QUARITCH, Bernard, 272
Quarterly Review, the, 334
 Queensberry, Duchess of, rebukes Beckford, 21, death, 37; *otherwise mentioned*, 247
- RANGOON, 267
 Raphael:
 The Roman Galleries, 157; Beckford's admiration for, 292-94, 295; *St. Catherine*, 293; pupils of, 293-94
 Rauzzini, singer, 121
 Reading, J. J., letter to Beckford, 231
 Redding, Cyrus, "*Memoirs*" cited, 6, 300, 305; conversations with Beckford, 18-19, 71, 94, 124-25, 142, 145, 174-75, 181-82, 190, 218, 219, 280, 283, 287, 299, 320, 321, 322, 351; correspondence with Beckford, 281; on Beckford's life, *quoted*, 344
 Reform Bill, the, 188
 Religion, Beckford's, 276-78
 Rendlesham, Suffolk, 127
 Repton, Humphrey, letter from Beckford, 256
 Retz, collector, 289
- Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 345, 352
 Ricault, author, 131
 Richardson, John, "*Dissertations*," 130, 135
 Rimini, 152
 Rivers, second Earl of (of the second creation), 8 *note*, 120
 Rivers, William Horace, third Earl of (of the second creation), 8 *note*, 170
 Robins, George, 300, 305, 306
 Robson, bookseller, 134
 Rogers, Samuel:
 Friendship for Beckford, 1, 2; on the Episodes, *quoted*, 145; correspondence with Byron, 145-47, 239; visit to Fonthill, 239-40; letter to Beckford, 240; description of Beckford's daughters, 283; and Beckford's "*Letters*," 328-29; *otherwise mentioned*, 352
 Roman Catholicism, Beckford's remarks on, 276-77
 Romano, Julio, pupil of Raphael, 293
 Rome, 94, 152, 154, 155, 156; letters from, 97-98, 156-59; feast of St. Peter, 157
 Rome, De, 289
 Romney, George, 345, 352; portraits by, 294
 Rossi, sculptor, 366
 Rumilly, 52
 Russell, Lord John, 188
 Russia, the peace, 285, 286
 Ruysdael, painter, 311
 Rye, 16
- ST. ANGELO, Castle, 157
 St. George's Chapel, Windsor, 224, 257, 366
 St. James's, Court of, 87
 St. Paul's, 177, 210
 St. Peter's, 122, 151, 157
 St. Petersburg, Court of, 284, 285
 St. Pierre, 243
 St. Sulpice, Paris, 179, 277
 St. Vincent's, Lisbon, prior of, 175, 181
 Salève, the Mountain of, letters written from, 29-34, 51
 Salisbury, 151, 191, 197, 243, 248, 355

- Salisbury Plain, 365
 Salisbury Spire, 365
 Saltash, 268-70
 Salthill, 271
 Sanrage, dealer, 247
 Sardière, Guyon de, 289
 Sarti, composer, 154
 Saussure, M. Bénédicte de, "Voyages dans les Alpes," 26
 Savannah le Mar, Jamaica, 7, 101
 Scholl, Dr., 181, 197, 249, 310
 Scott, Sir Walter, Beckford's comments, 274
 Seaford, 15
 Secheron, letters from, 166
 Shaftesbury, 365
 Shakespeare, William, 50
 Sherwood Lodge, 274
 Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 14
 Sienna, 94
 Simier, bookbinder, 289
 Smith, dealer, 311; letter from Beckford, 312
 Smith, Adam, *cited*, 253
 Smith, Charlotte, "Emmeline," 183-84
 Smith, Sidney, 275
 Smith, Sir S., 200-201
 Soane, John, 238
 Solander, Dr., 46
 Sotheby, Leigh, auctioneer, 309, 311
 Soubin, collector, 289
 Soubise sale, the, 178
 Southey, Robert, Byron's dedication to, 240; library of, sale, 311; *otherwise mentioned*, 143, 312
 Spa, 90, 91
 Spain, Beckford's visit to, 91, 176-77
 Spencer, W. R., 302 *note*
 Staël, Mme. de, 20, 352
 Stafford, Lady, 178
 Staggemeier, bookbinder, 289
 Staines, 161
 Sterkel, Abbé, 120
 Still, John, 197, 223
 Stonehenge, 96 *and note*
 Stop's Beacon, 214
 Storer, James, 227 *note*; description of Fonthill Abbey, 353-66
 Stourhead, 356, 365
 Strassburg, letter from, 100-101
 Strauss, "Das Leben Jesu," 276 *note*
 Strawberry Hill sale, the, 296-307, 320
 Suffolk, Duke of, portrait, 304 *note*
 Sugar, the duty on, 264-65
 Sussex, Duke of, 333
 Swiss Adventurers, the, 253-55
 Switzerland, the people of, 254-55
 Sylvanus, 164
 TALBOT, 259, 279
 Talleyrand, 333 *note*
 Tartary, Plains of, 82
 Temple prison, the, 199-201, 208
 Tenducci, 121
 Tenhove, N., "Memoirs," Beckford's comment on, 274
 Teniers, 311, 312, 319
 Thames, the, 245
 Thevellraye, 208
 Thomlinson, 261
 Thomson, Francis, estimation of Beckford, 335
 Thoresby, Ralph, 301 *note*
 Thorpe, dealer, 304, 305
 Thou, De, 289
 Thouvenin, bookbinder, 289
 Thuanus, collector, 289
 Thun, 29; letters from, 31-34
 Thurlow, Lord, visit to Fonthill, 22; letter from Beckford, 117; letters to Beckford, 117-18, 185-87, 229; *otherwise mentioned*, 122, 208, 352
 Tieck, J. Ludwig, 309
 Timbs, John, "English Eccentrics," 314 *note*
 Times, the, 210, 333; on the Fonthill sale, 315
 Tirol, the, 99, 100, 150
 Titian, 213, 300, 324
 Tottenham Court Road cow-yards, 175
 Tunbridge, 283; letter from, 166
 Turin, 162
 Turner, Dawson, 125
 Turner, J. W. M., Beckford's criticism, 294
 Turney, 113
 Tyson, Michael, 125
 UNITED STATES, the question of colonisation, 252-55

Utrecht, 90

VAGA, Perino del, 302, 306

Vallombrosa, 239

Van Balen, 365

Van Dyck, 312; Beckford's collection of 500 engraved works, 296

Van Eyck, *Burial of a Cardinal*, 360

Vanderwerf, 320

Venice, 91, 102, 104, 114, 154, 155

Vermont, 253

Vernet, painter, 294

Vernon, the Misses, 118

Verona, 91; letters from, 152

Veronese, Paul, *Catherine Cornaro*, 363

Vertue, George, 306, 307

Vestris, Mdlle., 112

Vesuvius, 161

Vevey, 172

Victis, rock of, 113

Virgil, 84

Visme, M. de, 182

Volney, 243

Voltaire, Beckford's visit to, 26-27, 32, 49, 142, 352

Vulliamy, 360

WADSWORTH, James, letter from Beckford, 252-55

Wakefield, Rev. Gilbert, letter from Beckford, 255

Waldegrave, Lord, 299

Walpole, Horace, Beckford's antipathy towards, 299; "An Essay on Modern Gardening," 302 *note*; collection, 320; *The Castle of Otranto*, 332; *otherwise mentioned*, 333

Walstein, Countess de, 176

Walter, Mrs. Nevill, letters from Beckford, 249-51

Warburton, Dr., 46

Wardour Castle, 359, 365

Welcker, 289

Wellesley, Sir Arthur, the convention, 190

Wells, Beckford returned M.P. for, 187

Wendelin Bible, the, 309

Wenzel, Baron, oculist, 89

West, Benjamin, visit to Fonthill, 238; letter to Nicholas Williams,

238; *King Lear*, 294; two pictures, 364; the *Pietà*, 365; *otherwise mentioned*, 234, 266, 352

West Indies, 252; the hurricane of 1781, 101; the sugar trade, 257; taxation in the, 264-65

West, Mrs., 238

Westminster School, 9

Weston, 3

Weston, Stephen, criticism of "Vathek," 140

White, Richard Samuel, of Lincoln's Inn, 111, 191, 264, 266-69, 345; correspondence with Nicholas Williams, 192-93

Whitehall, Jamaica, 7

Whitham, 108

Wildman, Mrs., 179

Wildman, Thomas, letter from the Rev. Thomas Henley, 137-39; letters from Beckford, 179, 277; *otherwise mentioned*, 68, 110, 134, 186, 192, 195, 214, 215

Wilkes, John, politics, 10

William and Mary College, Williamsburg, 125

Williams, Mrs., 197, 200, 248

Williams, Nicholas, correspondence with Beckford, 190-91, 193-211, 247, 248-49, 262-63; letter to James Goddard, 191-92; letter to R. S. White, 192-93; arrest and imprisonment, 199-201, 206-8; letter to Sir William Hamilton, 230; at Fonthill, 238, 246, 252

Willis and Waterhouse, Messrs., 267

Wilson, bookbinder, 290

Wilson, William Rae, "Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land," Beckford's comments on, 276

Windsor, 93; St. George's Chapel, 224, 257

Winterbottom, Thomas, 10

Wolcot, Dr. (Peter Pindar), 352; "Peter's Prophecy," 234; "A Lyric Epistle to Sir William Hamilton," 234-35

Wolf, J., "Sketches," Beckford's comment on, 273-74

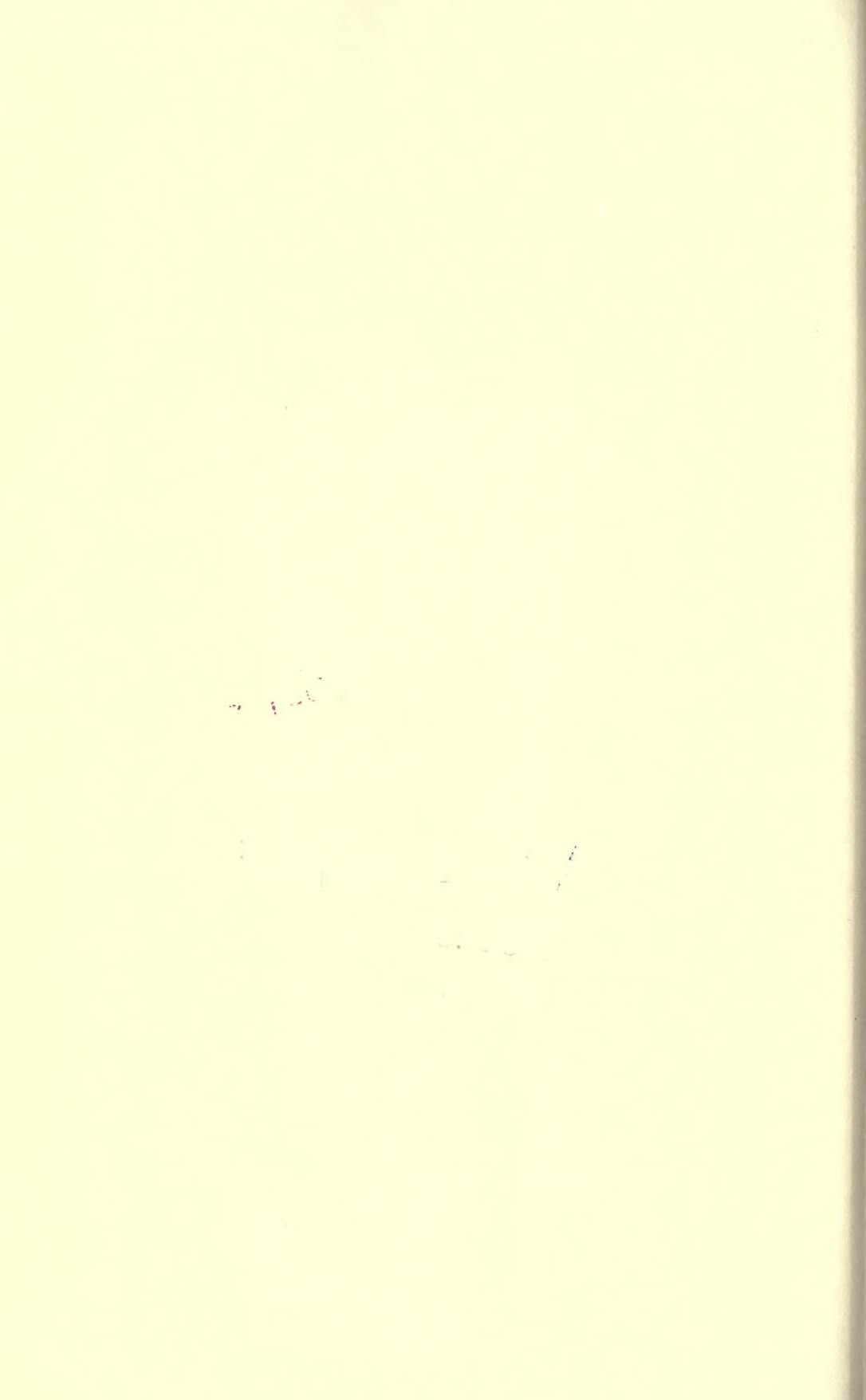
Wolsey, Cardinal, 362

Woodbridge, 134

Worcester, 67

- Worms, 91
Wouvermann, painter, 319, 345
Wright, 346
Wyatt, James, letter from Beckford, 214-15; the order for Font-hill Abbey, 220-21, 224, 225; at Fonthill, 237-38, 245, 266; design of the Abbey, 358; *otherwise mentioned*, 210, 234, 247, 263, 265, 321.
Wyatt, Matthew, portrait of Edward III., 366
YORKE, Sir Joseph, 90 *and note*
Young, Sir George, 245
ZUCCHERO, portrait by, 360





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